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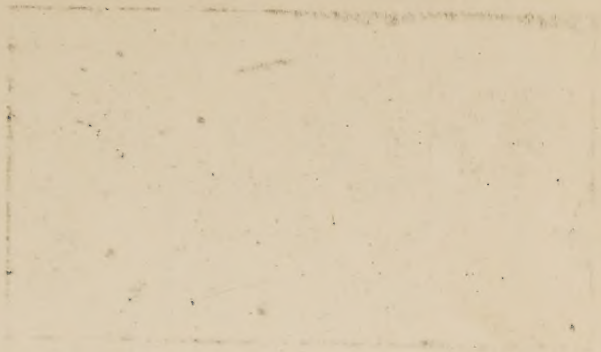

# Good and Evil

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*The Paddock Lectures for 1917–1918*

# Good and Evil

## A Study in Biblical Theology

By

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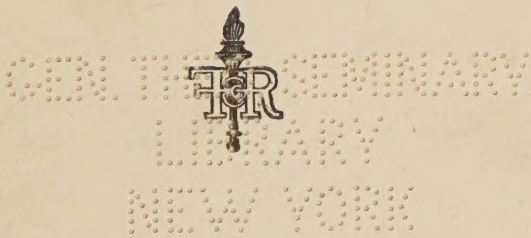

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*In grateful commemoration of the completion of twenty-five years as instructor and professor in Old Testament Study*

# Preface

WHEN I was honoured with an invitation to deliver the Paddock Lectures it was suggested by my esteemed friend, Dr. Wilford L. Robbins, then Dean of the General Seminary, that my subject be the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. I worked for some time in that field, but soon became dissatisfied. My difficulties arose not from the field of investigation, for it is singularly rich and inviting; but from the fact that so many excellent workmen had been in that field already, so that there was no lack of admirable treatment of every book in that limited collection. I could not be satisfied to toil in fields already pretty well gleaned. I desired to make an original contribution to the study of the Bible, and so I craved a fresh subject.

With the cordial approval of the Paddock electors I modified the subject so as to cover ground not traversed by others, and I cherish the hope that thus I have been able to produce what will prove a useful work. Such originality as I can hope to claim lies not in any new discoveries or novel interpretations, but in the gathering of the material relating to a very important subject. There are many treatises on the problem of evil, but so far as

I am aware, there has previously been no effort to assemble systematically and adequately the Biblical material on the subject.

It would possibly be more accurate to substitute "Old Testament" for "Biblical" in the sub-title. But I wanted to use all the resources of the Bible as far as possible, and so preferred to use a comprehensive term. I have not been able to enter the field of the New Testament save for occasional illustration, for my time was limited. For the same reason I have not pretended to use all the material in the Hebrew sources; but I think I have been able nevertheless to bring in practically all the theories on the problem of good and evil offered by the sacred writers. The treatment is reasonably complete so far as the subject is concerned, though it was not possible to describe all the cases or to cite all of the illustrative texts.

"Biblical" seemed a better term on another ground. When I came to present the highest point reached by the Hebrews on the subject of Good and Evil, I was compelled to go beyond the Hebrew Bible and enter the field of the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature. That literature has received considerable attention of late years on the part of scholars, but it still deserves more consideration on the part of Bible students. It is strangely mixed. There is much that is grotesque and dull, and much that is highly imaginative; but there is much that is as noble and worthy as anything to be found in the strictly canonical works. The

Holy Spirit certainly did not cease to move the hearts of men when the Hebrew canon was closed.

The translations are based on the American Revised Version, on the whole the best version in our language. I could not, however, be content without invariable resort to the original; nor without modifying the rendering whenever necessary; nor without emending the Hebrew text in many cases where that text is plainly at fault.

L. W. B.

*General Theological Seminary,*
*New York.*

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# I

# The Source of Good and Evil

# I

## THE SOURCE OF GOOD AND EVIL

*I am Jahveh, and there is no other god; I form light, and I create darkness; I make good and I create evil; I Jahveh do all these things.*—ISAIAH 45 : 6b, 7.

THE story of the ten lepers that were healed by our Lord[1] on His last fateful journey to Jerusalem has often been cited as an illustration of the general lack of gratitude among the sons of men. It is indeed a humiliating record that only one of the ten took pains to make his acknowledgment for such a signal blessing; and it was a signal blessing, for they had all been suffering from a terrible disease and now were restored to health.

The incident may be used to elucidate another human characteristic, the little concern man shows as to the source of the good which comes into his life. Nine of those lepers were quite content with the fact that they were healed. And being well they wanted to get through with the ceremony of a priestly examination and discharge, so as to return as promptly as possible to normal conditions of living. They were altogether incurious about the

[1] Luke 17 : 11 ff.

one who had wrought the great change in their lives. They were not concerned to discover by what means such boons were brought to men.

But there was one of another temperament. He could not be satisfied merely that he was well, and let the matter rest there. He had something of a philosophical mind and very much of a grateful heart, and he could not rest until he had made his acknowledgment to God, and to one he deemed to be God's agent; and he would look more closely into the source from which the good which had befallen him had come. The origin of his loathsome disease may have seemed to him an insoluble riddle, but the good had started with the spoken word of a man, and it was worth while to see such a man from a nearer view than was permitted a leper.

There is a tendency in man to take the good for granted, and to think that it is only the evil which requires explanation. That age-long tendency is interesting, and has suggestive apologetic possibilities. For a general instinct of the whole human race is not lightly to be cast aside. If the world and man were the result of the working out of blind spontaneous forces, evil would at all events be quite as likely a result as good, and one might even hazard the conjecture that accidental and undirected powers would be more prone to record failure than success. The stubborn fact is that man has looked upon good as the normal course of life, and has concerned himself little with its origin. The evil is deemed abnormal, and so it alone seems

to need explanation. William James acutely expressed the general sentiment when he said, "There is a problem of evil, there is no problem of good."[1]

My subject, however, is made comprehensive, and so it covers both good and evil, for if we attempt to philosophize, all factors of life must be included in the investigation. To a great degree, however, I shall be constrained to bend to the traditional treatment; for I must follow the paths along which our material will lead, and we shall see that the Hebrews, like other people, for the most part took the good for granted. When they did essay to trace it back, it may be said at once, they rarely failed to give due credit to their God.

It is a trite saying that the Jews looked for their golden age in the future. On the whole a wonderful optimism does run through their sacred literature. In the times of disaster they were wont to look forward to a latter day when the evils from which they suffered would exist no more. But however hopeful they were of their future, the records show that the people who occupied the holy land were at nearly all periods well schooled in hardship and adversity.

Take first of all the country itself; for something of a people's fortunes depends upon the character of the land on which they dwell. From the point of view of the barren deserts in which the tribes had been roaming since the exodus, the land

[1] Quoted in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, October, 1917, p. 801.

of Canaan no doubt looked like a paradise. The scouts who were sent ahead to investigate their promised goal brought back a specimen of the grapes and pomegranates and figs, with which it was assumed that Canaan abounded, and it was reported to be a land of milk and honey.[1] In another place Moses describes the land to the tribes in these glowing terms: "Jahveh thy God is about to bring thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, in which thou shalt have no lack; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig copper."[2]

The glowing picture represents the truth, but it is a truth that might easily mislead, because it is incomplete; it does not tell the whole story. For Palestine is a country in which the rainfall often failed at the crucial time, and then there was great suffering. There is an eloquent description of such a condition in a late prophet: "The seeds rot under their clods; the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down: for the grain is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle wander about, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. . . . The flame hath burned all the trees of the field. Yea, the wild beasts yearn unto thee, for the water

[1] Num. 13 : 23 ff. [2] Deut. 8 : 7–9.

brooks are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness."[1]

The soil of Palestine, especially in the numerous valleys, is fertile, and even with the primitive methods of agriculture practised by the inexpert Hebrews, would produce generous crops. But then as now there were many enemies of vegetable growth, and even when the rains fell in their season, the splendid promise of planting time was often destined to result in heart-breaking failure at the harvest season. A prophet puts the matter in a word: "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive trees hath the palmer-worm devoured."[2] In the later days God raised up another prophet chiefly for the purpose of interpreting to the afflicted and perplexed people a devastation of the land wrought by locusts. Wave after wave of the pestilential insects swarmed over the country until the fruits of the earth were completely destroyed. To quote a striking description of the catastrophe: "What the palmer-worm left hath the locust eaten; and what the locust left hath the canker-worm eaten; and what the canker-worm left hath the caterpillar eaten."[3] Then it may be inferred there was

[1] Joel 1 : 17 ff. In places the rendering is somewhat uncertain. There are textual corruptions which create serious difficulties. The general trend of the passage is clear, and that suffices for my purpose.

[2] Amos 4 : 9.

[3] Joel 1 : 4.

nothing left for other insects to devour, and the sustenance for the people must have been meagre indeed.

The Hebrew looked upon length of days as one of the greatest of earthly blessings. As the abode in Sheol meant the deprivation of all that man valued, he looked upon this world as the one chance to drink in the good that life afforded. In some respects Palestine offers conditions favourable to prolonging life, for it has a fairly salubrious climate. The land is broken into an alternation of hills and valleys. The heat of summer is usually tempered by refreshing breezes from the sea. At times there are such heavy rains that the land is thoroughly washed until it is clean and healthful.

Nevertheless, the people suffered from all manner of disease. The heat occasionally reaches the danger point. The only child of Elisha's benefactress at Shunem was stricken with sunstroke as he played among the reapers in the harvest field.[1] A grave mental disease invades the royal palace, and develops a homicidal mania in the Lord's anointed on the throne.[2] The best of kings was not immune, for while in the prime of life, Hezekiah was seized with so grave an illness that one who appeared in the dual rôle of prophet and physician at first diagnosed a fatal malady.[3]

There are numerous references to lepers in the Old Testament, though they are so scattered that an inference might easily be drawn that the dis-

[1] 2 Kings 4 : 19 ff. [2] 1 Sam. 16 ff. [3] 2 Kings 20.

ease was rare. The inference would be misleading. In the Gospels the allusions to those suffering from that dread disease are frequent, but lepers are only mentioned in connection with Christ's healing. Had He not wrought the cures, we should be quite ignorant of the wide prevalence of the disease. In the older Scripture there was no Son of God to heal, and so lepers are only spoken of incidentally, as for example in connection with the siege of Samaria.[1] But such references as we find,[2] and especially the space given to the regulation of this disease in the priests' code,[3] force us to the conclusion that in Canaan this fateful malady was a prevalent affliction at all times.

In the course of time parts of the country became densely populated. When the Orientals gathered in cities they congregated closely. It was not their habit to waste many good shekels in generous-sized building lots. The streets were narrow, the houses packed densely together, and a street cleaning department unknown. The heavy rains may periodically have washed the towns clean, but there are long months in which there is no rainfall, and thus a condition of danger arises. Add to this the fact that the ancient people were quite ignorant of all sanitary practice or hygienic principles, so that, except in the case of leprosy, they failed to recognize such possibilities as con-

[1] 2 Kings 7 : 3 ff.

[2] Ex. 4 : 6 ; Num. 5 : 2–12 : 11 ; Deut. 24 : 8 ; 2 Sam. 3 : 29; 2 Kings 5, 7, 15 : 5 ; 2 Chron. 26 : 1. [3] Lev. 13, 14.

tagion or infection, and the stage is set for what too often occurred, the devastation of the population by plague and pestilence. Such a pestilence spread over the whole country from Dan to Beersheba in the days of David, and the epidemic was so fatal that, if we may trust the appalling record, in three days there were seventy thousand deaths in that small area.[1] It gives a vivid impression of the extent of these frightful epidemics, and of the heed given to them to note that the word "plague" occurs in the English Old Testament one hundred times, and the synonymous word "pestilence" half as often.

But the greatest woe which befell Israel came not from the drought or blasting or mildew or disease, but from the sword. The most destructive enemy was not the insect or the germ, but man. Israel often suffered acutely from lack of the necessaries of life, and Israel felt the pang when sons were cut off in childhood or in the prime of young manhood. And yet these evils were far surpassed by those inflicted by the hostile nations by whom they were surrounded.

There was a deep conviction among the people that they had an unusually clean title to the land of Canaan. They did not appeal to an ancient possession from the day when the country was a virgin soil. They did not base their claim upon the fact that their fathers had by their heroic struggles wrested the land from the beaten Canaan-

[1] 2 Sam. 24:13ff.

ites. But they insisted that Palestine was a gift of God, and so the validity of their title no people could question. When Abraham migrated westward his movements were directed from on high, and when he reached the ancient sanctuary of Shechem, his God appeared to him with the message, "Unto thy seed will I give this land;"[1] and at a later stage in his migration the promise was repeated: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look: from the place thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest will I give to thee and to thy seed forever."[2]

When the tribes attained a position to invade the promised land, they had no occasion to be conscience stricken as a body of land hungry annexationists, for they were invited to the attack by the supreme Lord of the whole earth. Their orders for invasion came indeed from high authority; for we read, "Jahveh spoke unto Moses, saying, Send for the men, that they may explore the land of Canaan, which I am about to give unto the sons of Israel."[3]

The Canaanites did not recognize this title, however sanctioned by the ancient promises and the contemporary commands of God; accordingly they opposed the aims of Israel by a stubborn resistance at arms. As the story of the Conquest was told in the later days, or even to a degree by the actual

[1] Gen. 12:7. [2] *Ibid.*, 13:14 ff.
[3] Num. 13:1 ff.; cf. Josh. 1:1 f.; Judg. 1:1 f.

participants, it was less war than a sort of triumphant march through a helpless land, and an almost unopposed and complete massacre of its inhabitants. In the whole story there is on the record but a single instance of a repulse, and even that was slight and temporary. According to such records as we have, the two and a half tribes from the east of the Jordan furnished forty thousand armed men for the invading army,[1] from which it would appear that Joshua's total force must have been vast indeed. Yet the list of casualties for the whole series of campaigns shows the loss of but thirty-six Hebrews.[2] God indeed seemed good to Israel if their hosts could so easily conquer an enemy better equipped and trained than themselves.

But there is another story gathered partly by sure inference and partly from authentic and early material found in other sources. This story shows that the tribes met many a bloody repulse before they reduced the former inhabitants of Canaan. The two preëminently warlike tribes, Simeon and Levi, were so nearly wiped out in the struggle against the Canaanites[3] that one lost its identity

[1] Josh. 4 : 13.

[2] *Ibid.*, 7 : 5. The historian may have assumed that Israelites were slain in other battles, but this is the only place where casualties are mentioned. The writer indicates at every point that Israel's success was overwhelming.

[3] The fate of these tribes is pictured in the Blessing of Jacob :

> Simeon and Levi are brothers ;
> Weapons of violence are their swords.
> Into their council I would not come,

altogether, and the other became but a scattered remnant, finally taking on the peaceful function of a priestly class. The tribe of Benjamin seems also to have been reduced to small numbers in these wars. Moreover, that fierce struggle for possession continued down as far as the time of David. In those centuries the Canaanites were gradually killed off in battle, or reduced to submission, but in the process many thousand Israelites must certainly have laid down their lives.

The history of Israel as we know it is a history of their wars. Their own great historian of the later days divides his work into two parts, the Antiquities of the Jews and the Wars of the Jews. But the first part is not altogether an archæological treatise, but like the latter part deals largely with wars and rumours of wars. If we leave out the Law and the Wisdom books, all the rest of the Hebrew sacred literature is closely connected with military affairs. The prophets are full of indictments of Israel because of their sins, but the occasion of a large part of the prophetic activity is the impending danger from Israel's watchful foes.

Down to David's time there was a continuous

> With their assembly I would not unite.
> For in their wrath they slaughter men,
> And when they will they hamstring oxen.
> Cursed be their rage, for it is strong,
> And their fury, for it is cruel.
> I will disperse them in Jacob,
> And scatter them in Israel.
>
> —Gen. 49 : 5–7.

struggle to get footing in the promised land, to maintain the position they had so hardly won, and to extend their boundaries. Soon after his day his considerable kingdom was rent in twain, and civil war raged intermittently for two centuries. Meanwhile both parts of the divided nation were constantly engaged in wars with other and often mightier peoples. The Arameans, the Egyptians, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, one after another, and sometimes two at once, waged relentless war upon them, killing their troops, carrying away prisoners, and plundering their palaces and their temples. Despite an unusual hardiness and vitality Israel was gradually bled white, and ceased to exist as an independent power with the devastation of their land and the complete destruction of their capital at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar. For nearly five hundred years the state had been crumbling, growing ever feebler and poorer under the heavy blows of its mighty foes, until it fell into such fearful ruin that it has not recovered to this day.

Whence had come all these evils to the people of God? What produced drought and mildew and disease and death? What moved the nations that they should harass this land?

Before attempting to answer these questions it is expedient to call to mind the fact that at various times many of the Israelites were not faithful children of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but worshipped the gods of the ancient sanctuaries of Canaan, as well as the gods of Egypt, Phœnicia

and other countries. At one time the worship of Baal was so predominant in the northern kingdom that Elijah gave up his mission in despair and in the blindness of his depression declared that he was the sole follower of Jahveh left upon the face of the whole earth.[1]

The authors of the sacred writings, however, were untainted by that cult, and it is to those who worshipped their own God that we must go for an answer to the questions which press for reply. Those writers do sometimes recognize the existence of other gods than Jahveh, but those other deities have nothing to do with Isreal or his land, and they insist that Israel should have nothing to do with them. It must not be inferred that these writers were solitary figures, holding and cherishing the belief of a small minority. It is rather true that the majority of the people usually thought as they thought. Their views then represent approximately the views of the whole body. How do those inspired writers explain good and evil?

Their conception of Jahveh shows that it was inevitable what the answer to our questions must be. For Jahveh was not conceived as a God that was far off, but as one that was nigh. Jahveh was not a transcendent being of infinite majesty enthroned on high and too exalted to be concerned with the affairs of men. Jahveh was close to His people, vitally interested in their fortunes; and Jahveh directed all the forces, even to the smallest,

[1] 1 Kings 19 : 10.

which work in the world. Their view of God's operations was fundamentally the same as the sublime theology taught by our blessed Lord when He said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered."[1] Nothing in nature happens apart from God, but every phenomenon is a manifestation of God. The lightning is fire from heaven, and the thunder is the voice of God.

In all the varied literature of the pre-exilic age, every voice with one consent declares that all good and all evil, in the natural world, in the animal kingdom, and among men, come alike from God. This conclusion is found in most of the exilic and post-exilic literature as well. For in the book of Job, the Hebrew classic on the problem of evil, Job and his antagonists debate hotly about certain issues, but they are in absolute agreement that the source of all the cruel woes from which the central figure is tormented were afflictions from on high. In the Song of Hannah we have a brief statement that expresses Israel's faith:

> Jahveh killeth and maketh alive,
> He bringeth down to Sheol, and raiseth up.
> Jahveh maketh poor, and maketh rich;
> He bringeth low, he also lifteth up.[2]

We may well first lay stress upon the beneficent work of God. This is elaborately and beau-

[1] Matt. 10:29 f. [2] 1 Sam. 2:6 f.

tifully set forth in one of the splendid nature Psalms:

O Jahveh my God, thou art very great;
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
Who maketh the clouds his chariot;
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.
He sendeth forth springs into the valleys,
They give drink to every beast of the field.
He causeth grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service of man.
The high mountains are for the wild goats,
The rocks are a refuge for the conies.
He appointed the moon for seasons,
The sun knoweth his going down.
The lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
O, Jahveh, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
The earth is full of thy riches.[1]

In a thousand years there was no change in this view; with one consent the people looked to God as the author of all that was good. St. James, whose Judaism was never wholly submerged in his Christianity, expresses the ancient sentiments as well as those of his own age when he says: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."[2]

The Old Testament writings enumerate many

[1] Ps. 104. [2] Jas. 1:7.

instances in which good is sent of God's own initiative. It is easy for us to read the story of Moses' early life, and, as St. Paul puts it, "speaking after the manner of men," to explain the course of events by the law of cause and effect. Interpreting on this principle we perceive that his return to Egypt to rescue his enslaved brethren was the direct consequence of the events which led to his banishment. But while the Hebrew historian had all the material ready to his hand, the instant there is a movement for Israel's good, he interprets that good as the consequence of plans made in heaven; so we read: "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant. . . . And God looked upon the sons of Israel, and took knowledge of them."[1] God says, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good and broad land." And he says to Moses: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people Israel out of Egypt."[2]

One of the most critical stages of Israel's life is that covered roughly by the book of Judges. The tribes had invaded Canaan, and secured a foothold in the hills. But the best part of the land was still held by the enemy. Then there were other peoples who coveted the famous land "flowing with milk and honey," and who were ever alert to take from Israel their recently acquired possessions.

[1] Ex. 2:24 f. [2] *Ibid.*, 3:8, 10.

Further, the inward condition of the tribes was as bad as the outward. Many opinions to the contrary notwithstanding, the tribes were not united, but were jealous of each other, indifferent to each other's troubles, and displayed much mutual hostility. There was nothing remotely resembling a recognized national authority, and even within the various tribes there was general disorganization. The wretched condition is aptly described in the terse statement: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes."[1] When people are doing what is right in their own eyes, there is a state of anarchy, a condition perfectly illustrated in the present condition in Russia.

In that critical time the future of Israel hung in the balance; but Israel was saved by a small company of heroes, and one of the greatest of these heroic souls who cast aside their own interests and devoted themselves to the well-nigh hopeless task of saving the state, was a woman. Ehud and Gideon, Barak and Jephthah, Tola and Jair, Ibzan and Abdon, and, to make a suitable climax, Deborah,—these are the brave souls whose work against the most desperate odds made the building of the empire of David possible.

The compiler of these stories knew, for example, that Gideon drew the sword as an act of blood revenge, that Jephthah girded on his weapons to secure a crown, that Samson smote the Philistines

[1] Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1.

on the principle of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," and that the enemy was always the aggressor. But the author collected and annotated the tales of the heroes, not because he loved and desired to preserve stories of sublime courage and of daring deeds, but with a purely didactic interest. And a part of his dogma can be at all events most briefly stated in his own words: "Jahveh raised up judges, who delivered them [the sons of Israel] out of the hand of those that despoiled them."[1] Whatever other motives may have been in operation, according to this editor, Barak and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, were in reality prompted to their work by the direct influence of God.

One of the greatest evils man has to meet is ignorance. A vast proportion of the sin committed by man is not due to any inherent vicious tendency, but to lack of knowledge. Disease is not wholly "an error of mortal mind," as Mrs. Eddy would persuade us; but errors of mortal mind play a conspicuous part in sickness, even if they are not exactly the sort of errors that the author of "Science and Health" tabulated. Sanitary knowledge works for health. If the nations of the world had known in 1914 what is so plain in 1918, no one of them would have dared to start this war. And they might have known, had some of them listened to their prophets, and others disregarded the appeals of their false seers. I suppose most wars are due to the fact that some nations are so blind that

[1] Judg. 2:16.

they cannot see that when the heaven is red and lowering in the morning, there will be foul weather before night.[1] Knowledge of the principles of irrigation has enabled man successfully to challenge the drought. The discovery of germicides has made it possible to defy blasting and mildew and the locust and the palmer-worm and the caterpillar.

Israel comes on the stage as a primitive people living in deep darkness, and long before they return to the wings, they have radiated light which shines throughout the world. The only source of this light which it is necessary to mention here comes from, or perhaps better, through the prophets, for to themselves and to us they were but a secondary source, or perhaps more nearly reflectors, of light. They shone because they were shined upon. Light came from them, because light came to them. They saw more than other men, because they put themselves in an attitude in which they could say, "In thy light do we see light."[2]

The sending of the prophets was justly regarded as one of the greatest benefits which God conferred on His people. It was a constant source of illumination. The office of the prophet was kept filled with worthy men practically through all periods of Hebrew history. As one of them puts the matter, representing Jahveh Himself as the speaker, "From the day your fathers came out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them."[3]

[1] Matt. 16:3. [2] Ps. 36:9. [3] Jer. 7:25.

There was no age in which the gracious God would leave Himself without witness. As it is finely put: "Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, yet shall they know that there hath been a prophet among them."[1] In the same strain Zacharias sings: "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."[2] And a chief function of the prophet was to lift the heavy burden of ignorance.

But it was by no initiative of their own that they ventured to take up the unwelcome office of enlightening their fellow men. They spoke to men, because God first spoke to them. Amos thundered his denunciations of Israel, not because he was an agitator, or because he loved conspicuity, but because Jahveh took him from following the flock, and Jahveh said to him, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.[3] The classic story of Isaiah's call shows that he was with great difficulty convinced of his duty, and that he only yielded himself in the face of overwhelming evidence that his God needed and demanded his services. Before he could be persuaded he must see God with his own eyes; he must feel the seraph's touch on his own lips; and he must hear God's own appeal: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"[4] The fact that we are reading the story of a vision does not mean that we are dealing with unreality. God forbid that the Christian should ever lie steeped in the error

[1] Ezek. 2:5.
[2] Luke 1:70.
[3] Amos 7:15.
[4] Isa. 6:8.

that the real and the material are identical, and that the real excludes everything not material. Man would be in a pitiable state if the soul had no larger vision than that offered by such a frail physical organ as the eye.

When the prophet spoke to the people, he was wont to preface his message with the most daring claim ever made by mortal man; for it is recorded a thousand times that the prophet began his oration with these words: "Thus saith Jahveh." Indeed the phrase recurs so often, that its audacity is obscured. As a matter of fact the prophet makes a vastly more ambitious claim than the Kaiser when he asserts that God has made him the supreme authority in his empire or in the world, or than the Pope when he claims infallibility. And yet it underlies the whole of the prophet's conception of his great office, so that of him it could be truly said: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you."[1]

There are some things which a person will do only under compulsion. St. Paul tries to explain what led him to follow such an apparently reckless course that a friendly ruler cries out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad";[2] and it does not take many words to solve the mystery, for his point is made clear when he says, "The love of Christ constraineth us."[3] If the prophet had elected himself to be the light of Israel, if he had felt free to take the course he would; then most of them would soon have been only too

[1] John 15:16. [2] Acts 26:24. [3] 2 Cor. 5:14.

eager to abandon their office. For the reward was the jail, the stocks, poverty and the enmity of man. They were like the disciples who were hated of all men for Christ's sake. But they did not enter the office of their own accord, and they did not keep it of their own will. One of them has left a record of his desperate straits, and of his determined efforts to quit the obnoxious job. Jeremiah was constrained to cry to the people a message of pestilence, fire and sword. But the people wanted a message of peace. Like a lot of blindly stupid people in our day, they seemed to think that all one had to do to get peace was to talk peace.

How gladly Jeremiah would have given them the smooth message they desired. He craved peace and prosperity as much as his bitterest persecutors. But he was obliged to speak to the world what God spoke to him; and God speaks, not according to man's desires, but according to actual truth. The truth became a burden to the prophet's soul. Ah, the truth is often a burden to any soul; and as souls do not like to bear heavy burdens, they too often give truth a wide berth. But Jeremiah had the burden laid upon him. Yet once he thought he could escape, even as Elijah and Jonah had thought to escape; he was weary of the despairing cry of violence and destruction, the only message which God permitted to fall from his lips. And then he made the great resolve to make mention of God no more, nor ever again to speak a word in His name. But alas for the ox that has not learned

the sharpness of the goad, or for the servant that does not know the power of the master, or for the prophet who does not see that God sometimes means that His will shall be done. Jeremiah paid for his rebellion with an agony of inward pain that is only too evident to the discerning reader of his *apologia:* "Then there was in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with restraining and I cannot bear it."[1] God means to save Israel if He can, even though the execution of His good purpose rends the very soul of His servant.

Yes, all that is good comes from God. The smallest good: the food for the tiny insect; and the biggest good: spiritual enlightenment for man. Can it really be true that from Him too comes the vast array of evils which at times make life on earth so hard? Is it possible that He is also the source of disease and drought and of war and of sin? Is it true that a tree cannot always be known by its fruits? that a good tree may, and habitually does, bring forth corrupt fruit? that of figs one may gather thorns, and brambles from grapes? Does the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter?

The Hebrew answer was nearly unanimous. There are many calamities mentioned in the Bible. Often there is no word said to indicate their source; but whenever the evil is traced to its origin, it is without dissenting voice attributed to the same

[1] Jer. 20 : 9. The last verb is added from the Septuagint.

"Father of lights, with whom can be no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning."[1] Whether the Hebrew saw the imputation of his doctrine or not, it is impossible to say. But in the pre-exilic period he did not hesitate to affirm it. At all events he had the full courage of his convictions.

God indeed raised up the judges to save Israel at a time when salvation was sorely needed. But God had previously created the desperate situation which made the call for deliverance so imperative. The Midianites and all the other oppressing foes assailed Israel because Jahveh set the to them welcome task. The earth was parched because God withheld the rain. The grain died in the field because God infected it with blight. The child of David died because God smote it with disease. God saw the unhappy plight of the disorganized tribes, and He set up a king to govern and to protect. But the melancholia which so soon afflicted the anointed of the Lord was ascribed to the presence of an evil spirit from Jahveh. Ahab was misled, because God sent one of his own company of immortals to be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. Pharaoh did a wrong that cost his kingdom a great price of blood and treasure; but the poor king was helpless, for God had hardened his heart. Man spoke many different languages to the confusion of commerce, to the disturbance of international peace and to the bewilderment of the harassed students

[1] Jas. 1:17.

of all ages; but in the beginning it was God who made the speech of one people unintelligible to another.[1] The nation of Israel was united and great in the days of David, but it was God who inspired the prophet to incite Jeroboam to rebel, who moved Rehoboam to give the fatal answer to the delegates of Israel, thus leading to the rending of the kingdom in twain, and He brought Assyria to destroy one part, and Babylonia to throw down the other. The people did not heed the counsels and the warnings of their greatest and most persuasive seers, for God made their heart fat, and their ears heavy and their eyes shut so that they could not see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.[2]

The greatest evil which has come into the range of man's experience is sin. The Hebrew Scriptures contain an ample story of human wickedness. But as a rule they are silent in regard to the source of sin. From the constant reproach to man because he does sin, and from the frequent fervid appeals to man to keep from sin, or to cease to sin, it is a just inference that to do right or wrong was within man's own powers. But there is other plain testimony to the existence of a doctrine which would make it as impossible for man to control his acts as to regulate the movements of the stars.

I have already referred to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and to the command to Isaiah to make the people's heart fat, their ears heavy and

[1] Gen. 11:7. [2] Isa. 6:10.

their eyes dull, thus making sin inevitable. There is a more startling story still. The doctrine of the divine origin of sin is broached, somewhat obscurely perhaps, in David's protest to the persecuting Saul: "If it be Jahveh that hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering."[1] Saul was guilty in the relentless pursuit of a capable and loyal servant, and even the fugitive can see that Jahveh may be the real instigator of the wrong. But there is no obscurity in the declaration that Jahveh instigated David against Israel, directing him to make a census of the fighting strength of the nation, an act that was deemed a great wrong.[2] The sin of David, on account of which the people suffered a great disaster, was put into his heart from on high.

This incident brings us to a point where diversity of opinions appears. It is not time yet to enter that field. It is enough to have shown that the Hebrews looked to God as the source alike of light and of darkness, of good and of evil, of virtue and of vice. From the same opening in the fountain there did seem to flow both sweet waters and bitter.

Was God like a whimsical creature who will at one time fawn and at another strike? Does He send good and evil arbitrarily? Must man labour to keep Him pleased lest an evil mood should result in disaster? Or is there some definite principle according to which God sends good or evil? and

[1] 1 Sam. 26:19. [2] 2 Sam. 24:1.

is it possible to ascertain that principle and act accordingly? In other words, is it possible for man to forecast the character of what God will send? and is there a course by which he can make sure of receiving the good and of escaping the evil?

It was important for man to find the answer to such questions. There are problems the solution of which may wait, such as whether Raymond's revelations to Sir Oliver Lodge are genuine, or not. There are others that affect daily existence, and ignorance in regard to which produces much harm. Our problem is of that kind. The inspired men of old realized the import of the problem and they grappled with these questions, and presently we shall search out their answers.

# II

# The Governing Principle

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## THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE

*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*
—GALATIANS 6 : 7.

THE law of gravitation is under some circumstances a merciless law. It brought down the tower of Siloam and crushed the eighteen who chanced to be in the way without consideration or pity. Under other circumstances, it serves a kindly purpose; for if we know the law and respect it rigidly, its trustworthy invariation makes our life on earth secure. In looking over earthly phenomena we see that there are many mouths which blow cold or hot. From our best friend even, while it is easy to draw smiles, it is often possible to induce frowns.

So the Hebrews believed that in the one God was to be found the source both of good and of evil. But God sent them with discrimination. There was a law or principle by which His judgments were governed. God Himself was at pains to teach man this vital principle, and God was greatly concerned that man should govern himself accordingly. A prophet states a stupendous and far-reaching doctrine, packed into so brief a compass, that its vast import is hardly grasped: "For the Lord

Jahveh never does anything without first revealing his intention unto his servants the prophets."[1] Jahveh on occasion will inflict terrible evils on man, but always with a definite object in view, and never until man has had abundant forewarning.

It would be vain to try to make a mystery out of a very simple matter, and so I present at once the governing principle of God's acts, as the ancient Hebrews established it; but I do it in words more eloquent than my own:

> I have been young, and now am old;
> But I never saw a righteous man forsaken,
> Nor his seed begging bread.
> I have seen a wicked man triumphant,
> And lifting himself up like a cedar of Lebanon.
> I went by, and lo, he was gone:
> I sought him, but he could not be found.[2]

That is the teaching of the prophet and of the poet, of the lawyer and of the scribe. In the whole wide range of pre-exilic literature, the literature of the age of Israel's greatest virility, the teaching is the same: evil in all of its forms is the direct consequence of sin;[3] and good in every

[1] Amos 3:7.

[2] Ps. 37:25, 35 ff. In some places I have followed the Greek text which gives a better reading than the Hebrew.

[3] Sin was seen to be one of the evils sent, at least sometimes, of God (Lect. I). Sin could scarcely be sent as a punishment for sin. But the Hebrew theology is not built up as a system, and when we fit together fragments from different authors and varying ages there is not always a resultant scheme that is consistent.

varied manifestation is the reward of righteousness.[1]

It is not desirable to ignore the seer's claim of a revelation. But to appeal to that first and always is like trying to teach algebra to a child that has not learned arithmetic. We may stress revelation all we will, but we do not need to ignore every-day psychological processes. A man who has not learned the significance of the red and lowering sky in the morning will be but an indifferent medium of a revelation.

Therefore it is well to look first at daily human experience, and there I think we may see the crude foundations upon which the prophets built their theory of good and evil. In the family the same parent bestows good and inflicts pain, and, so far as the parent is wise and just, in strict accord with the child's conduct. When punishment is the necessary course the parent, however tender and loving, must himself administer the correction, and not turn the erring child over to another hand, as the Church in its most benighted days turned over those it condemned to the secular arm for martyrdom.

Likewise in the State, even though the State be in the crude form of a primitive tribe, there is a rough system of rewards for the law-abiding and of punishment for wrong-doers. Justice often miscarried in the ancient tribe and is still perverted

[1] This teaching is often set forth in the book of Proverbs: see 3:33-35; 10:16-30; 11:4-10, 18-21; 12:7-21; 13:22.

before the most modern tribunal. But the aim of government is to surround the one who does right with conditions that make for prosperity, and promptly to lay a heavy hand upon the one who does evil.

Moreover, the discerning easily sees that in the natural course of life there are certain forces at work which tend to reward the obedient and to punish the rebellious. The slothful and the improvident may feast bountifully during the harvest, but will suffer destitution during the winter; while the energetic and the prudent will have abundant stores at all seasons. There are ever foolish virgins who take no reserve oil in their vessels, and who are consequently denied the joys of the wedding feast. Railroad trains will not wait at the station for those affected with the pernicious habit of unpunctuality. If a man is kindly disposed towards his neighbours, he will have the reward of generous friendship and desirable respect; if he is ill-natured and churlish, he must bear the painful burden of unpopularity and dislike. If the shepherd overdrives his herd or his flock, some will be lost by exhaustion on the road. If the great ship carelessly runs into the iceberg, death and disaster follow.

God was deemed to be wise and powerful and good. He had within His easy control all the forces of the universe. These forces were not turned loose at random to hit or miss according to chance. God directed all phenomena to accom-

plish a definite end. It was inevitable then that since God is the author of both good and evil, and since there are men that are good and men that are bad, or as the same man or the same people are sometimes good and sometimes bad, fortune must smile on the one class and frown upon the other.

This governing principle, as it was set forth by the Hebrews, furthermore satisfies a deeply seated human sentiment. It is very difficult to educate men up to the point where they can cheerfully see the one who has wrought but one hour paid the same as those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," may have been an attempt, as one of my predecessors in this lectureship urged,[1] to limit the infliction of penalties, but it roughly expresses what men are still wont to regard as justice. For the wicked to continue unscathed and even prosperous in his wickedness is not in accordance with what most men consider fair.

Philosophers of all races and of all ages have essayed to penetrate the mystery of evil, but have found themselves confronted with a baffling task. Approaching the matter scientifically it is not always easy to relate the given evil to a certain cause; or even when such a relation is established, it is hard to see why the evil should be. The philosophers were never able to start with any recognized governing principle, and from their inductive study they have never succeeded in estab-

[1] Rev. William Temple, "Church and Nation," pp. 63 f.

lishing one. The Hebrew sages found their task lightened because they held to a governing principle as a fundamental. Once accept the theory that evil is caused by sin, and the explanation of any given evil is a simple matter; for however much of calamity may be found in the world, there is enough sin to serve as cause.

The difficulty for the scientific thinker is immensely increased because he is always seeking for what we may call a natural relation between the evil to be explained and its assumed cause; and in the absence of such a natural relation, he will not be satisfied with a proposed cause. The Hebrew thinker did not share this perplexity, because he invariably turned to God as the ultimate cause, and it was easy for him thoroughly to believe that God could do anything He chose. As we proceed now to develop the Hebrew method of explaining evil with some fullness, we shall be prepared to note the purely artificial relation between the evil to be interpreted and the wrong-doing to which it is invariably attributed.

Work is regarded as an evil by a surprisingly large number of people. It is true that man preaches a good deal about the dignity and value of labour, but many men even now look upon it only as a bearable means to a necessary or desirable end. Those who toil with their hands are put in a class by themselves even to this day, and socially it is not the upper class. The chief aim of all the labour organizations which abound in the

modern industrial world is to reduce the amount of labour required of each man. The most radical trades union does not propose that its members shall cease work; for they realize that some toil is necessary to secure a subsistence; but the object is ever towards shortening the working hours. Whatever may be thought of toil, by hand or brain, there is a marked disposition among the sons of men to do as little of it as possible.

The primitive man did not feel called upon to make any pretense that it was good for one to work, and he never laboured if he could help it. The Hebrews frankly regarded toil as a great evil, and at least to some of them an unnecessary one. Why then did not God so constitute the world that labour would be unnecessary? The answer is plainly given in God's judgment upon the convicted Adam: "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." [1] If only man had not sinned, the world might always have been fed with angels' food, a

[1] Gen. 3:19. It is true that this passage describes a condition in primitive human life, but the story was written, at least in its present form, about the ninth century B. C. The same conception that labour is undesirable is expressed in the acrostic poem on the virtuous woman (Prov. 31:10-31). The worthy wife is one that with the assistance of her maids performs all the labour of the household, so that her lord has nothing more arduous to do than to display his carefully groomed person as he gossips with his neighbour in the gate. An Arab's highest wish is said to be "a palace built of gold and silver bricks, with a delicious soft divan on which he would lie at his ease and do nothing all day but smoke a water-pipe" (Wild, "Evolution of the Hebrew People," p. 179).

gift falling straight from heaven. Presently we shall all gather at our dinner tables, and thereon food will be placed ready for our eating. If we stop to think, we can easily discern the vast amount of labour lying back of every mouthful we take. Had there been no sin in the world, so the Hebrew thought, it might still be true:

> And he rained down manna for them to eat;
> And gave them grain from heaven.[1]

The first requirement for labour is bound up with the problem of subsistence. But it is a fair inference that all other work might equally have been avoided. To the untutored there is something almost miraculous in the performance of a great musician. To master that art, a reasonable natural gift is certainly vital; but all the talents which God may bestow are of no avail without long periods of the hardest kind of work. We may infer from the Hebrew point of view that if Adam had only resisted the seductive voice of his wife, and the wife the enticement of the serpent, we might all without effort be the most accomplished musicians. Perhaps on some such ground it has been assumed that in a state of life where sin exists no more, all may successfully play upon the harp.

There is something inspiring deep awe as one stands before an audience to deliver his finished sermon or lecture. And much more there is something very satisfying about the moment, too. The

[1] Ps. 78:24.

labour of the delivery is comparatively slight, but back of the sermon or lecture there must lie many hours of consecrated toil in direct preparation, and many years of steady work in the absorbing of material. Had our first parents obeyed the law when the whole code contained but a single statute, any man might at any time have discoursed learnedly on any subject. Such are some of the far-reaching implications of the doctrine that labour is not necessary in itself, but is a miserable state resulting from sin.

But Adam's one transgression produced still further evils. Weeds will grow without preparing the soil, without sowing, and without cultivation. They endure drought and frost; they block the way of useful vegetation; and, as the many amateur gardeners developed by the conditions of war have learned, can be kept down only by back-breaking effort. On the other hand, it is useless to sow grain except in laboriously prepared and well fertilized soil; the seed must be carefully selected and properly planted; and for most edible crops a great deal of cultivation is necessary. Why should not the ground of itself bring forth wheat and corn and potates and beans, and only bear the useless and obstructive weeds as the result of painstaking effort? The answer is again given in the judgment upon our common forefather: "Thorns and thistles shall [the ground] bring forth unto thee."[1] The disposition of the natural world was

[1] Gen. 3:18.

changed in order to find an adequate punishment for the first transgressor.

Premature death was adjudged a great evil. As death was deemed the end of all existence, those who died young missed the great opportunity which others enjoyed. Even with the hope of immortality there is a pathos in the state of those cut off before their time. The death of a child was deemed even more of an evil to the parents than to the deceased, and the ancients builded better than they knew, for so it undoubtedly is. To the Hebrews there was no mystery and nothing accidental in such unhappy events, for they long anticipated St. Paul's doctrine that by sin death entered into the world.[1] The child that Bathsheba bore to David was stricken of Jahveh with a mortal disease, so that all of the king's fasting and praying was in vain to save the infant's life. Had David taken more seriously the prophet's declaration, he might have washed and anointed and eaten sooner than he did; for Nathan had said that while David's repentance sufficed to save his own life, it would not alter the decree of death against one of whom it could truly be said, "In sin did his mother conceive him."[2] The same doctrine persists in New Testament times. Those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices were supposed to have died thus because they were sinners above all Galileans.[3] Herod Agrippa's terrible death was ex-

[1] Rom. 5 : 12. [2] Ps. 51 : 5.

[3] Luke 13 : 2.

plained as a direct act of God because he was guilty of blasphemy.[1]

Even when there is no flagrant evil known, the approach of death is assumed to point to the hidden presence of sin. The Sidonian widow, whose praise is in the Gospel, must on that account as well as for other reasons be regarded as on the whole a good woman, heathen though she was. She had shown herself ready to obey the prophet's demands, and she made a loaf for him before she gave the last meal to herself and her starving son. And yet this son, after he had been restored by proper feeding, was seized of an exceeding severe "sickness, so that there was no breath left in him."[2] The afflicted mother does not doubt the cause of her desperate strait. There is more sorrow than reproof in her bitter cry: "Thou hast come unto me to bring my guilt to remembrance and to slay my son."[3] In spite of her generally upright life, there was a consciousness of some sinfulness in the past. The sin had not been promptly followed by punishment, and she had assumed or hoped that God had overlooked or forgotten it. But now she is confronted with evidence that the man of God was come to her, not to conserve life, but to take it, and that the death of the boy is the price she at last is called upon to pay. In the end she believed that her sin had found her out.

In the first lecture allusion was made to plagues

[1] Acts 12 : 21–23. [2] 1 Kings 17 : 17.

[3] *Ibid.*, ver. 18.

and pestilences which ravaged the land of Israel. Such visitations were invariably explained as the consequence of sin. The recognition of this principle helps us at least partly over some pretty serious difficulties. It was noted that the sacred writer did not scruple to say that Jahveh instigated David to take the fatal census of the population. But that writer did not think of Jahveh as showing animosity towards David. God was not striving to break down the character of a good man. Israel was the culprit, and God's wrath was aroused against the guilty nation. There must be a signal act of wrong to justify and to make impressive the terrible punishment. The instigation of David to do wrong is but incidental to the main purpose. The scourge by which many thousands of Israelites were struck down was the thing which had to be accounted for, and from the Hebrew theology the only possible and the all sufficient explanation was sin. But we note this startling conclusion that it was not essential that the sin be committed by those who are destined to punishment. In Adam's sin all mankind is guilty.

Defeat in war is a sore evil. A nation may endure a single reverse, but to lose the war, if the cause is deemed reasonably just, is hard. To the Hebrew failure in battle was especially bitter, because victory meant the favour of God, and defeat His animosity. His faith is expressed in the lines:

Blessed be Jahveh my rock,
Who traineth my hands to fight,
And my fingers for war.[1]

A warrior's prowess was due to the spirit of God which roused him to do heroic acts. When the favouring spirit of God moved him, his valour achieved triumph; and when the divine hand was withdrawn, he became faint-hearted and weak.[2]

As the first step in the conquest of Palestine, God directed Joshua to move across the Jordan at the head of the combined hosts of Israel, and to destroy the nations which stood in his way. The first objective was attained by a blast blown from the priests' horns. In the second venture the armed forces of Israel were vanquished and suffered an ignominious defeat. Joshua was humiliated and puzzled. He could not see why the easy success at Jericho should not be repeated at Ai. But the calamity is explained from the lips of God Himself: "Israel hath sinned; they have dared to transgress my covenant which I commanded them."[3] So far-reaching are the laws of God that a single guilty soldier may imperil a whole campaign.

[1] Ps. 144:1.

[2] This is well illustrated in the story of Samson (Judg. 13–16).

[3] Josh. 7:11. The defeat by the Philistines at Eben-ezer was regarded as the work of Jahveh, and from the measures adopted, it is apparent that the Hebrews thought that God was offended because the sacred ark was not in the battle lines (1 Sam. 4:1–4).

That defeat was, however, but a temporary check in an otherwise altogether successful war. We may turn therefore to the greatest military disaster that ever befell the Jewish state, the utter destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem. We might trace the history for a hundred and fifty years, from Hezekiah to Zedekiah, and we should witness a series of disastrous invasions now by the Assyrians, and now by the Babylonians. Every blow left Judah weaker in man power and in other military resources. As each disaster came, we could trace its cause, as the history is interpreted for us, to the sins of the people. It will suffice, however, to take the final stage, when the armies of Nebuchadrezzar dealt the city a blow from which to this day it has never fully recovered.

Zedekiah, the reigning king at the time, sent dignified ambassadors to Jeremiah, the prophet whom God had raised up to try to save the city and people; and this was their request: "Inquire now of Jahveh for us: for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon wages war against us: peradventure Jahveh will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may depart from us."[1] The king realized that from a human point of view the petty forces of Israel had no chance against the mighty hosts of Babylon. Unless God now intervened marvellously as He had against Sennacherib a century before, Judah was doomed.

There were many who felt that God's interven-

[1] Jer. 21:2.

tion must necessarily be interposed. Some were sure that the temple of Jahveh would insure divine protection;[1] for God could not forsake the spot where He had caused His name to dwell. Others, with more faith than judgment, cried disdainfully of the foe: "Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?"[2] There were prophets among those who had already been carried into exile that were predicting a speedy release from bondage.[3] A short time before Hananiah, who was apparently deemed a prophet of equal dignity and authority with Jeremiah, had persistently declared, and had prefaced his declaration with the usual prophetic formula: "thus saith Jahveh," that Jahveh would break the yoke of the king of Babylon.[4]

How did Jeremiah feel? Was he able to comfort and encourage the anxious king? Listen to his words: "Thus saith Jahveh, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the Chaldeans that besiege you; and I will gather them into the midst of this city. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterward I will deliver Zedekiah, and his servants, and the people, even such as are left from

[1] Jer. 7:4.
[2] *Ibid.*, 21:13.
[3] *Ibid.*, 29 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, 28:2–4.

the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon . . . and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor show mercy."[1]

There is not much encouragement for the king in this oracle. Jahveh would make ineffective such measures of defense as the Jews had taken. Before the foe could compass the walls, God Himself would strike down the people by plague and famine; and those who survived these habitual accompaniments of a protracted siege, would fall victims to the Chaldeans' swords. Jerusalem was doomed, and the only way by which any man, king or peasant, could save even his own life was by surrender to the enemy.[2]

Jahveh's attitude was as hostile as Nebuchadrezzar's, and the prophet does not leave us in doubt as to the reason. He expresses it many times and in emphatic terms. It is enough that we select for citation here his moving appeal to the king, by which perhaps he tries to soften a little the heavy answer he had been obliged to give to the king's inquiry: "O house of David, thus saith Jahveh, execute justice in the morning, and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn so that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. And I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith Jahveh; and I will kindle a fire in the

[1] Jer. 21 : 4–7. [2] *Ibid.*, 21 : 8–10.

forest, and it shall devour all that is round about her." [1]

The historian agrees with the prophet, and in a few words he explains the awful tragedy which he describes at length. He introduces Zedekiah's calamitous reign by saying: "He did that which was evil in the sight of Jahveh, and through the anger of Jahveh did it come to pass in Jerusalem and in Judah, until he had cast them out of his presence." [2] A later chronicler elaborates the tale: "Zedekiah humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Jahveh; . . . but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning unto Jahveh." [3] But it was not only the king who was at fault: "Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jahveh which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. . . . And they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jahveh rose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed: he gave them all into his hand." [4]

With the historian and the prophet the poet too sees eye to eye. There is a collection of dirges in

[1] Jer. 21 : 12, 14.
[2] 2 Kings 24 : 19ff.
[3] 2 Chron. 36 : 12.
[4] *Ibid.*, 36 : 12.

the book of Lamentations, every one of which is a description of the sufferings resulting from the siege and capture of Jerusalem. Until we read those poems we can hardly form an idea of the extent of Judah's woes. There are cruelties revealed there of which we have no hint in other writings. It was veritably a rape of Belgium. But the poets are not in doubt that the overwhelming disaster came from Jahveh's hand, or as to the cause of the Lord's fierce anger; to cite a few lines suffices:

Jahveh hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions.
Jerusalem hath grievously sinned: she is become an unclean thing.
Her filthiness was in her skirts; she remembered not her latter end.
Watch has been kept of my transgressions; they are intertwined in his hand.
We have transgressed and rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.
The iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom.[1]

There is a subtler evil than wars or famine or disease, which is inflicted of God as a punishment for sin. God may shut Himself up, so that man has no access to Him. That fate befell Saul in one of his most desperate plights. The Philistines had invaded the land and the small forces of Israel were hard pressed on the slopes of Mount Gilboa. In his sore need the mad king sought aid and direction

[1] Lam. 1:5, 8, 9, 14; 3:42; 4:6.

from heaven, but "Jahveh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."[1] Saul determined on the always risky course of forcing God to answer, and to that end he visited the woman at En-dor, and by this agency learned the reason for heaven's silence. Jahveh was done with him, and had rent the kingdom out of his hand, because he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord.[2]

A similar condition underlies some words of the prophet Ezekiel. Certain of the elders of Israel, sharers in the exile in southern Babylonia, came to the prophet to make inquiries of their God. They are snubbed bluntly with the assurance that there is no fellowship between them and their God, and consequently there can be no communication. The prophet is so sure of his vision that he takes the rôle of a mere mouthpiece; Jahveh Himself speaks: "Is it to inquire of me that ye are come? As I live, saith the Lord Jahveh, I will not be inquired of by you."[3] God's silence is adequately explained in the course of the message: "Do ye pollute yourselves after the manner of your fathers? and play ye the harlot after their abominations? and when ye offer your gifts, and when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, do ye pollute yourselves with all your idols unto this day? and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord Jahveh, I will not be inquired of by you."[4]

[1] 1 Sam. 28:6.
[2] *Ibid.*, vss. 17 ff.
[3] Ezek. 20:3.
[4] *Ibid.*, 20:30 ff.

With this we might compare a fine expression of the same idea in the book of Lamentations: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through;"[1] and the declaration of Amos that in the coming days, because of the people's sins, there will be a famine, not for bread and not for water, but for hearing the words of Jahveh.[2]

If there is any manifestation in the world which might be generally regarded as a purely natural phenomenon, it is the storm. The Hebrews did not share that view. To them the storm was ominous in itself and in that it was a sign of an angry God. When in response to Samuel's call upon Jahveh, a thunder shower broke loose at an unusual season, the people were terrified and easily convinced that the tempest was God's rebuke for their rebellious course in asking a king.[3] Elijah breaks into Israelitish history with the stern pronouncement that for three years there will be no rain save as he may give the word.[4] One man of God could bring the storm when it was not wanted, and another could withhold the rain when it was sorely needed. Sin brought the rain to man's terror, and held it back to man's peril.

There is a more striking illustration still. A ship is sailing westward in the Mediterranean Sea. Its crew and passengers are made up of people of many races and religions, and yet all have substantially the same conception of the power of God, and of

[1] Lam. 3:44.
[2] Amos 8:11.
[3] 1 Sam. 12:17 ff.
[4] 1 Kings 17:1.

the principles which govern the exercise of that power. A mighty wind began to blow, and the sea arose till the small ship was in great peril. The sailors followed the usual course, throwing the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But the tempest did not abate, and the danger was not lessened. There was not a soul on board who doubted the cause of the storm. They were all convinced that some god was angry, and that their lives depended on discovering and appeasing the offended deity. In their terror they prayed each one to his own god, and still the waves of the sea dashed furiously. The shipmaster finds a solitary passenger in the innermost part of the ship fast asleep. Being aroused and rebuked Jonah—for all will have identified the passenger—admitted that he was, so to speak, a fugitive from justice, and that Jahveh his God had sent the storm as a punishment for his rebellion. It is to the everlasting credit of these rude toilers of the sea that they would take no decisive measures till they had bravely struggled once more to bring the ship to land; and it was convincing proof of their creed that the moment the sinner disappeared beneath the waves, the sea was stilled.[1]

Enough cases have now been cited to show that in the Hebrew scriptures there is a persistent con-

[1] Our Lord evidently took a radically different view, for though He stilled the storm at the urgent plea of His frightened disciples, He reproved them sternly for their fears which betokened a lack of faith (Matt. 8:23 ff. ; Mark 4:36 ff. ; Luke 8:22 ff.).

nection between wrong-doing and calamity. It is not difficult to see how the connection was made. For the Hebrews held fast to their theory that such a connection must exist. There was no lack of calamity in the life of the individual and in that of the state; and at all periods there was all too much of wrong-doing. Granted that evil is a punishment sent from God to the sinner, then it is not a hard task to discover a sin that will serve to explain the occurrence of evil. It is clear that to understand the Hebrew accounts we must begin with the calamity. Some reverse happens, and on the generally accepted principle, a sin is sought to account for it. A good illustration may be found in the story of Achan's sin. The army of Israel suffered an inglorious defeat. God had turned back the Hebrew weapons; this He would do only because some sin had been committed. No sin is known, but a sin is necessarily assumed, and resort is had to the sacred lot to find a culprit. The lot picks out Achan, the violator of the ban, and the theory is satisfied.[1]

Every ill fortune which befell man presupposes some antecedent sin. No matter whether there was a drought, or an earthquake, or an eclipse, or a storm out of season, or blasting or mildew, or locusts or caterpillar, or disease or untimely death, or war and disaster, the calamity could not have

[1] Josh. 7. Gideon was sorely puzzled to know why a great oppression was laid upon Israel if Jahveh was with them (Judg. 6:13). Had he known of some sin on the part of Israel, the matter would have been plain.

occurred save for the hand of God, and His hand is lifted as a menace only as the answer to the sin of man. To trace a connection was always possible, for the reason that there is no man that sinneth not. If Achan had not been discovered, doubtless it would not have been difficult to unearth some other guilty Israelite. Indeed, it is inherently improbable that he was the only one that yielded to the temptation presented in the rich spoils of Jericho.

It is like finding the origin of a common cold. As a result of our crude illogical reasoning, the list of conditions which are supposed to cause a cold has become quite ample in the course of time. A man discovers that he has this common ailment, and straightway looks back for the cause. He has a period of several days through which to search, and he will be dull indeed if somewhere in that period he cannot find a culprit to put his finger on, wet feet, damp air, a draught, being chilled, insufficiently warm clothing, or if he is a Christian Scientist, an error of mortal mind.

Now suppose we reverse the method of investigation. Instead of going the easy way from effect to cause, can we travel as positively in the other direction, from cause to effect? If a person traces his cold of to-day, let us say, to exposure to chill last week, ought he not to develop a cold invariably as the result of such exposure? Ought there not to be as many colds as exposures, if exposure is the true cause? If not, is there not a suspicion of the etiological principle?

Returning to evil, did the Hebrews trace from cause to effect, as well as from effect to cause? In other words whenever sin occurred, did calamity always follow as a matter of course? Or did God sometimes forbear to punish? Was the law immutable, or were there exceptions? There are interesting indications that the Hebrews had not overlooked this aspect of the problem and had reached the general conclusion that sin invariably resulted in some manifestation of evil.

When David ordered the census, of which I have already spoken, and which will come before us again, Joab and other officers pleaded with the king to desist.[1] The reason must be that they regarded the census as sinful, and were fearful of the consequences.[2] But the attitude of the prophet Gad is decisive. He assumes that as David has sinned, evil must inevitably come, and the only question open is the form the evil will take.[3] We may note in this story how it is presupposed that God can inflict any evil that He will, and so the penitent but condemned king is offered the choice of famine, defeat in war, or pestilence. A natural relation between the sin and the evil is not required.

Similarly when Jonathan violated the terms of

[1] 2 Sam. 24:6.

[2] Doubtless for a similar reason three of Jehoiakim's courtiers pleaded with the king not to burn the roll which contained the word of God (Jer. 36:25).

[3] 2 Sam. 24:12 ff.

his father's rash curse by refreshing himself with some wild honey, the people warned him of his transgression, and doubtless looked for evil as a result. And the evil came in the form of a victory disappointing and apart from the sin inexplicably incomplete.[1]

When Amos left his herd in Judah to prophesy to the Israelites of Bethel, the burden of his message is at first the enumeration of Israel's sins. Then he proceeds to the subject of punishment. He speaks of the day when Jahveh will visit the transgressions of Israel upon him.[2] His argument is that since sin has been committed, punishment will necessarily follow. The evil is not yet present, but the sin is; therefore the evil must come in due season.

In very terse terms Ezekiel assumes the invariability of the law that sin is followed by disaster: "the soul that sinneth it shall die."[3] That his meaning may not be mistaken, he amplifies the principle: "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."[4]

The principle is embedded even in the decalogue:

[1] 1 Sam. 14.
[2] Amos 3:14.
[3] Ezek. 18:20.
[4] *Ibid.*, 18:24.

"Thou shalt not take the name of Jahveh thy God in vain: for Jahveh will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."[1] And it is written into the terms under which Israel was to possess and enjoy the blessings of the promised land. In the book of Deuteronomy Israel is given the law, but the author goes much further than merely to say what the law is; for he constantly pleads with the people to obey the law. If they only hearken to the statutes and judgments, there is no end to the favours which will be showered upon them from heaven. But the other course is considered too, and the dire results of infidelity are thus portrayed: "And it shall be if thou altogether forget Jahveh thy God, and walk after other gods and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations that Jahveh maketh to perish before you, so shall ye perish; because ye would not hearken to the voice of Jahveh your God."[2]

It follows that it will always be possible to forecast the coming evil, just as the meteriologist can predict the advent of a storm. For whenever a sin is committed, evil in some form must inevitably follow. With this conclusion in mind we are in a position to understand passages in the Bible in which there is a specific prediction of evil, incidents which have sometimes caused a pang to devout and pious students.

Samaria was enduring a siege. The resultant

[1] Ex. 20:7. [2] Deut. 8:19 ff.

famine had become so severe that women were eating their own children. Elisha is led to predict that within twenty-four hours a measure of flour could be bought for a shekel. A certain high official jeered at the apparently ridiculous declaration, whereupon Elisha said to him: "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof,"[1] which being interpreted means that the skeptical captain would live to see the abundance of food, but would die before he could satisfy his hunger therefrom. The narrative goes on to say that this captain had been appointed to the charge of the gate, and that in the crush of the famished people to get at the immense stores of captured provisions he was trampled to death. His offense was disbelief in a prophet's word, on the surface not a very grave sin, certainly not a capital offense. But this disbelief might easily have resulted in the king's carrying out his already declared purpose to put Elisha to death, a fact that adds much to the gravity of the offense, and so to the justification of the severe penalty.

There are several other similar instances. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, took a very evil course when, instead of profiting by the warnings of Amos, he attempted to silence him, and so make God's word of none effect. The prophet is convinced that such a sin will result in condign punishment. "Thus saith Jahveh," so the direful prediction runs, "thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and

[1] 2 Kings 7:2.

thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in an unclean land." [1]

Pashhur, the priest and high official of the temple, purposing to curb Jeremiah's discouraging predictions, put the prophet in the cruel stocks and made him spend the night there. That such treatment of an innocent man, one who only spoke under what he believed to be the constraining hand of God, was a grave wrong, needs no argument. Jeremiah regarded the priest's frightfulness as a sin and so certain to bring swift and terrible punishment. Listen to the fortune which he foretells for the oppressor: "Thus saith Jahveh, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it. And thou, Pashhur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity; and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there shalt thou die, and there shalt thou be buried, thou and all thy friends." [2]

A famous incident of the New Testament will not fail to come into our minds in this connection, the death of Ananias and Sapphira.[3] There too a grave offense is committed; there too a Hebrew applies his theology that sin must certainly be followed by evil; and there too the speedy death of the guilty follows.

Our sources of information do not contain material that enables us to explain how in each of

[1] Amos 7:17. [2] Jer. 20:4–6. [3] Acts 5:1–11.

these cases the prophet or apostle was able to predict the specific form of the evil which befell the guilty. But a reasonable interpretation of the prediction indicates that we do not need to assume an undue and bitter personal resentment which is only satisfied by feeding on the forecast of vengeance. These prophets believed that the sinners would be the victims of a just divine law, over which man had no more control than over the movements of the heavenly bodies; and after all they only predicted in substance that God would act according to His own law. We may be convinced that those prophets held a hard theology; we are not warranted in judging them to be vengeful.

It is but a short step to a possibly sympathetic insight into an element in Holy Scripture which has given even more pain to the devotional reader and more trouble to the apologist. I mean the imprecations which unhappily abound in the Old Testament, and which still more unhappily are not altogether unknown in the New. In this case the aggrieved do not content themselves with predicting disaster as the normal consequence of sin; they pray for it, and often with a spirit that reveals a pronounced vindictiveness.

I can hold no brief for those who could write such utterances as for example we find in the one hundred and ninth Psalm. I do not attempt to justify them, for in the light of Christ's teaching I deem justification impossible. But explanation of their almost savage speech is another matter. A

proper understanding of the forces that moved them will allow us to put them in the category of men like Moses, who gave the world a very defective law, a law in part now denounced as immoral,[1] because of the hardness of heart of the people of the age in which God gave him his work to do. The execrations also may be explained as the natural product of the age from which they sprang, and the hard conditions which forced them from otherwise pious lips.

To understand the imprecation we must not begin with the curses, but with the offense without which they would never have been. I select for illustration the one hundred and ninth Psalm, because it contains the most sustained imprecation in the Bible. The writer begins with an ample description of the wrong, and we must begin where he does, and not for a moment lose sight of this wrong; he says:

> The mouth of wickedness and the mouth of deceit have opened against me:
> They have spoken of me with a lying tongue.
> They have compassed me about also with words of hatred,
> And contend against me without provocation.
> In spite of my love they are my accusers,
> They have rewarded me evil for good
> And hatred for my love.[2]

The sin is evidently of a subtle character, and leaves the assailed well-nigh defenseless. One can

[1] *E. g.*, the law of divorce. [2] Ps. 109: 2-5.

deal with theft or murder or any open injury. But slander and innuendo and Iagoism are hard to combat. But surely God must take cognizance of such offenses. He cannot look upon such wrongs as trifles. And yet God apparently does not act. There is no lightning falling from heaven to consume the evil-doers. The law of sin and punishment seems to be in abeyance. What more natural than that the persecuted should pray that the fire from heaven shall fall on the guilty, that God shall bestir Himself; for the outraged suppliant after all only asks that the ancient law of guilt and punishment should be put into execution against those who have injured him. And sometimes further relief for the devout reader appears in the fact that the writer's maledictions were based not on personal wrongs, but on persecution of the whole people of God.

This brief review of the vexed subject of imprecation offers us a bare hint of a difficulty. It was sometimes necessary to pray that God would execute His law, that He would punish the guilty. Then the law was apparently not working automatically and uniformly. The guiltiest sinners were not being overtaken by disaster. Clearly it is our duty as conscientious students to follow that hint no matter whither it will lead us. But that quest will take us further than we can go now.

# III

# The Pragmatic Test

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## THE PRAGMATIC TEST

*If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.*—JOHN 7 : 17.

IN the end every doctrine must submit to a pragmatic test, if such a test is possible. There are thousands of theories evolved speculatively from active minds, but the acid test comes when an attempt is made to apply them experimentally. We must prove all things, and hold fast only to that which is good. A doctrine is proved to be sound when it is shown that it will work. To-day it is our purpose to apply the test of experience to the Hebrew doctrine of good and evil as it was promulgated and generally held.

That sin is often followed by disaster is the verdict of all observers in all ages of the world. It is needless for me to point out that a person's sins may bring evil to him and often to others. The consequences of a single fault may be very far-reaching indeed. But the Hebrew principle required that sin, at all events an unpardoned sin, should have disaster as its invariable effect. That contention requires examination. But we shall find it best to approach the matter in the other order,

going from effect to cause. The world is full of disasters. Good as our lives may be, there is always a sprinkling of evil, and sometimes protracted storms of woes. Can we trace every evil to an antecedent and causatory sin? For the doctrine, if it is sound, must meet that crucial test.

Some of us in this faculty bear on our bodies the ineradicable marks of the surgeon's knife. Make the best of it one will the carving of the body, even with anæsthetic alleviation, is not an unmixed blessing. And still more the disorder which indicated surgical interference is an evil, and sometimes a very real and painful and, it may be, dangerous one. Do the scars on our body prove that there are stains on our souls? Is it possible to pick out the black sheep in this flock by an inspection of our skins? If we were to reply from the standpoint of the ancient Hebrew theologian, the answer must be in the affirmative. Medical science was unable to account for the goitre that a surgeon removed from my neck. Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar unhesitatingly would have said that it was the penalty of my sin.[1] The sin and the goitre are patent facts; I acknowledge them both. Is the causal connection between the two also self-evident?

For some days on the battle lines the artillery has been firing heavily. Then as the dawn breaks

[1] The prophet Elijah declared that the wounds resulting from Ahaziah's fall would not heal because he had consulted Baalzebub instead of Jahveh (2 Kings 1:2–4). The king's death was due to his infidelity to his religion.

a battalion of soldiers goes "over the top." In a few seconds many of them lie in a sleep from which no man will ever awake them; others are horribly mangled by bursting shells, so that for the rest of their miserable days, they can be physically but apologies for men; others receive slight flesh wounds, from which they will speedily and completely recover, as the Tommies are wont to put it "cushy ones," which will take them to "Blighty"; and others, often alas very few, will go through the ordeal untouched by shell or bullet or bayonet. Dare we grade the men morally according to the condition of their bodies when the battle is over? Are the sinners dead or wounded, and the saints left alive? Well, when the disciples, later the builders of the Christian Church, saw a man that was born blind, they were sure that his awful affliction was the result of sin. When Job's friends came to comfort him, moved as they were to dumbness by the sight of his woes, they were never in doubt that the magnitude of his sufferings was the measure of his sins. When Uzzah apparently trying to save the ark from falling was killed, the sacred writer does not hesitate to say that God slew him for his sin in touching the sacred emblem. When the good king Josiah was slain in battle at Megiddo, it was deemed certain that his untimely death was the consequence of his wrong in suppressing the cult at the local sanctuaries. Were these judgments right? Are these terrible conclusions sound?

In the first place, though in this respect the Hebrews all said the same creed, they did not all see eye to eye. Jehu waded to the throne through rivers of blood, and kept the gory stream flowing through a considerable part of his reign. Nevertheless partly by the fear he inspired, and partly by the purchased support of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, he had a prosperous reign and handed on his blood-stained throne to his son. The sacred historian who records the story shows that he is not altogether satisfied with Jehu, and yet he does not hesitate to give unqualified approval to the king's murderous deeds; for he made this record: "And Jahveh said unto Jehu, because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes; thou hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."[1] Moreover a prophet of God had anointed Jehu and had proposed to him that he rise against the reigning king.[2]

A hundred years later a son was born to Gomer and Hosea the son of Beeri. At the birth, Jahveh said to the happy father, "Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease."[3] It is true that one seer had in mind Jehu's swift elimination of the house of the notorious Ahab, and the other had in mind the streams of innocent blood

[1] 2 Kings 10:30. [2] *Ibid.*, 9:1–10. [3] Hos. 1:4.

shed by his guilty hands; but after all it was the same Jehu. What one prophet approves, another prophet condemns; a deed that one seer deems worthy of reward is by another adjudged worthy of punishment.

Again, we note that in certain difficult situations the history is so interpreted that we have in effect a modification of the doctrine of the relation between sin and evil. Sometimes there was a flagrant sin, which seemed to call loudly for signal punishment, and yet it was impossible to find any evil that could be interpreted as a penalty save by passing over a considerable interval of time. The generation that contracted the debt was not always the generation called upon to pay.

For example, take the case of Solomon. His reign was looked upon by later writers as a glorious age. The chronicler tells of his wisdom, his piety, and of his splendid building operations with great enthusiasm. But one thing he has against this great son of the immortal David, and that is his foreign wives, by whom in his old age his heart was turned away from Jahveh to other gods. Now according to the accepted theology so great a wrong demands severe punishment. The expectation of a suitable punishment is not altogether overlooked, for there is recorded an address to the apostate king in which Jahveh says: "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee,

and will give it to thy servant: notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."[1]

Solomon was the guilty one, but the just measure of his guilt should not fall upon him, because of Jahveh's regard for his father David, and for the city which he had chosen to place his name there. But after the faithless king had rounded out his full life in peace the appointed disaster would be visited upon his innocent son, and in reality upon the whole people of Israel. One might well wonder whether David were indeed honoured by tearing down the kingdom he had built up in the time of his grandson rather than in the time of his son.

This prediction of the dissolution of Solomon's empire is indeed sometimes regarded as a *vaticinium post eventum*, and such it certainly may be. But while that interpretation relieves the passage of any suspicion of supernatural knowledge, it does not in the slightest degree change the theological conception of the Hebrew writer, and with the theology alone we are concerned here. There was on the one hand Solomon's great sin, and on the other there was the disastrous revolt in the time of Rehoboam. Unrelated as they are in time and cir-

[1] 1 Kings 11:11–13.

cumstance, the chronicler has not hesitated to join them together as cause and effect. It is not easy for us to see any very close connection, and it is easy to explain the national tragedy in a more natural way. But what is so difficult for us is simple enough to those with another theology.

There is a similar story in regard to Ahab, but as there is a marked difference, too, it is worth our while to give it brief attention. The historian knows little good of Ahab the king of Israel. He, too, had a foreign wife, and she was passionately devoted to her own religion. She also turned away her husband from Jahveh to other gods. She was capable, ambitious and energetic, and moulded the king as she would. The history of the reign is a tale of evil deeds. The matter is summed up by the chronicler thus: "Surely there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jahveh, whom Jezebel his wife led astray."[1]

After the atrocious murder of Naboth and the confiscation of his ancestral land, Ahab went to the vineyard to inspect the long coveted prize. On the sinfully acquired plot he found calmly awaiting him the last man on earth he expected or desired to see, one of the sternest of all God's prophets. And that prophet was there to rebuke him severely for his crimes, and to depict the punishment that would come upon him. "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee," cries Elijah in the name of the Lord,

[1] 1 Kings 21 : 25.

"and I will utterly sweep thee away, and I will cut off from Ahab every man-child. . . . And I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. . . . The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the valley of Jezreel. Him of Ahab that dieth in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the country shall the birds of heaven devour."[1]

The law of sin and punishment seems in a fair way of just execution here. But what happened? Here is what we read, and herein the case differs from that of Solomon: "When Ahab heard those words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went about softly."[2] What of it? Cain cried out that his punishment was greater than he could bear, but he was sent into exile just the same. David pleaded with God for his baby's life, and used all the known arts to win divine favour, but the child died in spite of prayer and fasting and sackcloth. In Ahab's case the sackcloth and fasting and going softly were effective so far as the king himself was concerned. For we are told that "the word of Jahveh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? . . . I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."[3]

Again, one may plead the *vaticinium post eventum*, and perhaps we moderns need that much

[1] 1 Kings 21 : 21–24. [2] *Ibid.*, 21 : 27. [3] *Ibid.*, 21 : 28 ff.

relief here. But the obdurate theology refuses to budge even in the face of such a plea. In spite of the obvious moral burden thus imposed, the writer clings tenaciously to the theology, according to which God sends evil as a punishment for sin, even if the evil and the sin are not found in the same person, nor in the same generation. The long delay in the punishment excites suspicion, and demands explanation. Ahab's sackcloth is all that the writer knew, and he deemed it sufficient. It might satisfy us as a ground for forgiveness, but not as a reason for postponement.

Indeed it is easy to believe that the writers of such histories felt no shock at the things they recorded, and saw no difficulty in the interpretation which they put upon the facts. For from the comparatively early stages of the Hebrew religion the principle involved in these stories was generally recognized and boldly asserted. The doctrine is enunciated in the decalogue: "For I Jahveh thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."[1] Further this idea was widely disseminated in a homely proverb, one of the surest ways of expressing the popular faith, "the fathers eat sour grapes, and sons' teeth are set on edge."[2]

[1] Ex. 20 : 5.

[2] Jer. 31 : 29. The use of this proverb by Jeremiah and by Ezekiel shows that it was a popular saying and expressed a popular belief. "Set on edge" is not a very accurate rendering;

Now we cannot be blind to the fact—for it is a fact—that the sins of parents are often visited mercilessly on quite innocent children. The ragged son of a father whose wages are chiefly spent for strong drink may be the butt of his schoolmates. A child may be an idiot because his father was a beast. But according to the Hebrew teachers we must go further, for they would be constrained to say that God clothes the son in rags to punish the drunkenness of the parent, and steals away the child's brains to chastise the father's lust.

The crude belief that the children were in some way involved in the parents' guilt has led to great excesses among other peoples than the Hebrews. It led to what is called corruption of blood in old English Common Law, a system which produced such great evils that the law was modified by statute in the time of George III, and the monstrous idea was seen to be so wrong by our forefathers that corruption of blood is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

Nevertheless the belief was deeply seated in Hebrew thought, and the principle was ruthlessly carried out in practice. When Achan was detected in the crime of stealing some of the booty of Jericho, not only was he put to death, but all of his sons and his daughters were condemned to share

the original means, "the teeth become blunt," *i. e.*, are worn away. This is not a very natural effect of eating sour grapes, and the free English translation better expresses the idea that the children suffer the consequences of the parents' acts.

the same fate.[1] In response to the demand of the Gibeonites David handed over to them seven of the house of Saul, and they were hanged in expiation of their father's crime.[2] The ten sons of Haman were hanged to atone for the wrong of the enemy of the Jews.[3] The wives and children of Daniel's accusers were cast into the den of lions on the same principle.[4]

This belief enters prominently into the explanation of the downfall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah sees the calamity coming, and he realizes from his observation and from his bitter experience the sins of his age. But that alone does not account for the overwhelming disaster that is now knocking at the door. This age was after all not materially worse than other ages, and yet it was destined to suffer the greatest woe in Hebrew history. He easily finds an additional cause of the heavy blow: "And I will make their fate a terror[5] to all the kingdoms

[1] Josh. 7 : 24 ff. It is clear that there is a conflate text in this passage, for there is reference both to stoning and burning, and sometimes we find the singular pronoun referring only to Achan, and sometimes the plural referring to his children also. The earliest narrative apparently knew only of the death of Achan by stoning. A later writer added the burning and included the culprit's children and cattle among the victims. This late writer, however, was a Hebrew, and expresses Hebrew convictions of justice. Later such executions were forbidden by law (Deut. 24 : 16). It is told to Amaziah's credit that he did not execute the children of his father's assassins (2 Kings 14 : 6).

[2] 2 Sam. 21 : 1–9. [3] Esth. 9 : 13 f. [4] Dan. 6 : 24.

[5] This expression is difficult to translate. A.V. "cause them to be removed," and R. V. "toss them to and fro," are quite erroneous. The meaning is that God will punish Israel so that the

of the earth, because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem." [1] So in a bitter dirge, a poet wails:

> Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
> And we have borne their iniquities.[2]

The punishment, perhaps just because it is so terrible, is regarded as the cumulative result of the sins of many generations. With this outlook it would seem that there could be no hope for the future. The sins of the fathers belonged to the past and therefore could not be wiped out, and if Jerusalem fell for their sins, it must remain fallen forever. Jeremiah meets the difficulty by a declaration that in a new day which he foresees there will be a new law. "In those days," he predicts, "they shall say no more, fathers eat sour grapes, and sons' teeth are set on edge. But every man shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eats sour grapes, his own teeth shall be set on edge." [3]

Ezekiel takes this hint, and works out the same doctrine with greater elaboration. But the persistence of the old principle that the children are involved in their parents' guilt is shown by the fact that the prophet's new doctrine met with serious opposition. Those who held steadfast to primitive ideas questioned the equality of God's ways if the old law were abrogated, and so they ask, "Where-

worldly kingdoms will shudder with horror as they behold their unhappy plight. My rendering is an attempt to suggest that idea.

[1] Jer. 15:4. [2] Lam. 5:7. [3] Jer. 31:29 ff.

fore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?"[1]

In spite of the opposition the prophet boldly asserts the doctrine that each individual is accountable for his own sins, and not for the sins of any other person whatsoever. "What mean ye," he declares, "that ye use this proverb against the sons[2] of Israel, fathers eat sour grapes, and sons' teeth are set on edge. As I live, saith Jahveh, this proverb shall be in Israel no more. . . . Now, lo, if a man beget a son, and he seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and fears, and doeth not such like; he hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment . . . he shall not die for the iniquity of the father, he shall surely live."[3]

This is a sweeping modification of the established doctrine. It shows that in one of its aspects the accepted law was seen to be working hardship and injustice. It indicates that new conditions require new governing principles. It warns against trying to put new wine into old bottles. It makes clear that the test of experience showed that the old law was invalid, or at least defective. What we are more likely to deduce is that the old theory confronted by the test of experience is giving way.

[1] Ezek. 18:19. [2] So the LXX. [3] Ezek. 18:2 ff., 14 ff.

The Hebrews recognized the fact that under some circumstances the expected calamity did not fall. It was revealed to Abraham that God purposed to destroy Sodom, because, as it is quaintly told in the old story, a bad report of that city had come to his ears. Abraham was appalled by the idea of the destruction of a whole city, for that would mean that the righteous and the wicked would go down together, and he fervently pleads against the severe judgment. God recognizes the justice of the patriarch's plea, and in the end agrees to save the place if even ten virtuous men can be found there.[1] To a much later writer this idea that the presence of a few righteous souls will constrain God to spare a guilty community is intolerable. God is no longer conceived as restricted in His judgments so that He must spare the wicked in order that the guiltless may not be involved in their ruin. "When a land sinneth against me," prophesies Ezekiel to the inquiring elders of Israel, "by committing a trespass, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break for it the staff of bread, and send famine into it, and cut off from it man and beast; though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in its midst, they should deliver but their own lives by their righteousness."[2]

The righteous would not suffer with the wicked,

[1] Gen. 18:16 ff.

[2] Ezek. 14:13 ff. Cheyne confidently substitutes Enoch for Daniel in this passage ("Jewish Religious Life after the Exile," p. 159).

nor would the necessity of sparing them save the iniquitous. They would be delivered as Jeremiah was when Jerusalem fell, or as Lot was when Sodom was destroyed; but their virtue would benefit none but themselves.

Sometimes the threatened calamity, even when richly deserved, did not happen at all. In the later days from which the book of Jonah springs, or better in the circle whose gentler conceptions it sets forth, stress was laid upon God's loving kindness. It was that attribute of God that led to the prophet's mission to Nineveh. Jonah himself is dominated by very human instincts and by thoroughly Jewish sentiments, and so foreseeing the to him undesired result of his mission, would not undertake the unwelcome task until hard experience had taught him that God will not permit His gracious purposes to be thwarted.

When finally the unwilling prophet appeared in the vast heathen city, his message was brief and stern, and it expresses his own personal desires: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."[1] The city was described as notorious for its wickedness,[2] and according to the recognized law, merited the dire fate predicted by the prophet. Yet Jonah's prophecy was not fulfilled; the seemingly doomed city was not destroyed. And all that is deemed necessary to save the wicked heathen city is repentance, a repentance conceived to be so deep and so general, that to express it adequately

[1] Jonah 3:4. [2] *Ibid.*, 1:2.

even the beasts in the streets were clothed with sackcloth.

The principle that repentance and reformation would alter a decree of punishment finds clear expression at least as early as Ezekiel. In a still earlier day the guilty David bewailed his sins, and showed his repentance in every way that he knew, but the prophet could only promise a partial exemption from punishment; his own life was spared, but not the child's. Ezekiel goes much further: "If the wicked man turneth away from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and practice justice and righteousness, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him; by his righteousness that he hath practiced he shall live."[1] This idea is seen to be far from the popular conception of the time, for those to whom Ezekiel spoke did not hesitate again to declare that "the way of the Lord is not equal." There was still a demand for "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," even though the culprit had reformed, and would no longer gouge out his neighbour's eyes or knock out his companion's teeth.

There is always a danger for the one who looks at life with the prepossession of a rigid theory; for it tends to dull the perceptions so that actual phenomena are viewed with a distorted vision.

[1] Ezek. 18 : 21 ff. That the prophet was not wholly consistent need occasion no surprise.

There is an unmistakable tendency in Hebrew writings to persist in explaining facts by theories to such an extent that the facts lose their significance or their true relations. Doctrine has to be tested by facts, and the facts are the fixed and immovable elements. No writer of the ancient dispensation was more awake to this consideration than Koheleth, or, as he is more commonly called in the Greek form, Ecclesiastes; and this rather forbidding, but at the same time interesting and suggestive writer, may profitably engage our attention for a while.

The date of Koheleth may be pretty definitely fixed as the end of the third century before Christ. To understand the motive of the book, it is vital to know something of the age in which the writer lived, for I take it that one of the chief functions of every seer of God is to interpret the times in which he has been placed. Certainly Koheleth is full of the life of the age of which he was a part.

For the Hebrews the closing part of the third pre-Christian century was a dark age. The hopes raised long before under the auspicious rule of Persian kings had turned to biting disappointment. The Jewish state had not gained in power. There was not the slightest sign that Israel would ever regain its independence. The nation was under Egyptian rule, and was a bone of contention between two factions, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, a situation rarely favourable to the bone.

The internal conditions were as cheerless as the

external. The rich oppressed the poor, and the strong rode rough shod over the weak. The taxes imposed by the sovereign power were tremendously burdensome, and they were unevenly distributed. Those to whom these dues were farmed out collected them wherever collections were easiest. There was a rather low state of vitality in religion. There were no prophets to arouse the people, and on the basis of the old doctrines it would not have been easy to arouse them, for it was difficult to discover a strong motive for a consecrated life. It was an age which could not be explained on the simple formula, be good and you will be happy, for while there were many accounted pious, there were few that could be called happy.

Koheleth felt deeply the conditions in which he lived, and he read the times as he saw them with his eyes. He looked upon the world as it actually was, and therefore he sees many a venerable doctrine fail because it could not be fitted to the stubborn facts of life. It is true that his disillusioning experience had developed a marked skeptical tendency. He was admittedly a good deal of a materialist. He was perhaps too much like a man from Missouri who must be shown. "Who knoweth the spirit of man," he doubtingly inquires, "whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth."[1] Comforting assertions had been confidently made, but Koheleth will only go as far as the evidence

[1] Eccl. 3:21.

leads. The evidence that he had, to put it in his own words, was that "man hath no preëminence above the beasts. All go unto one place; all are from the dust, and all return to the dust." [1]

Thus we are prepared for one of the fundamental contentions of Koheleth, that we have no key to unlock the mystery of existence; in other words no known or even knowable doctrine can explain the facts the observer sees in the world. He had heard and read of the vaunted value of wisdom, which is pretty nearly what we understand by philosophy. Well, he had imbibed all the learning available in his day, and the result was keenly disappointing, for in spite of all the superior knowledge in the world, "that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be supplied." [2]

Such knowledge as is available to man proves to be quite inadequate, and to go materially further into the problem of life appears to be impossible. If the truth has not come to the wise who have lived in all the past ages, it will not come to the wise men of the present or future. Man grapples with the big issues of life, but all in vain. Koheleth concludes: "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. He hath made everything appropriate in its time; also he hath set ignorance in

[1] Eccl. 3:19 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1:15, following an emendation suggested by Ewald.

their heart, so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even unto the end."[1] This conception that God limits the bounds of man's knowledge carries our thoughts back to the time when it was regarded as overstepping proper human functions and invading divine prerogatives that man by eating the fruit of a tree had acquired a knowledge of good and evil.[2]

Man must be content with a partial knowledge, and to Koheleth that partial knowledge means such as we get from experience and observation. In the knowledge available to man there was nothing to support the orthodox doctrine regarding good and evil. For he says, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness, and yet I perceived that one event happeneth to them all. . . . For of the wise men, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come, all will have been long forgotten. And how doth the wise man die even as the fool. So I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me."[3]

Koheleth belonged to the richer classes, but he was keenly aware of the sufferings of the poor and lowly and was sympathetic with their woes. And in spite of all the doctrine asserting that they should not be, oppressions were very common. "I returned," he says, "and saw all the oppressions that

[1] Eccl. 3:9–11; cf. Eccl. 8:16 ff.; 11:5. I have followed an emended text.

[2] Gen. 3:22.

[3] Eccl. 2:14 ff.

are done under the sun: and behold the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and from the hand of the oppressors went forth power; but they [the oppressed] had no comforter."[1] Conditions were so bad that he congratulated "the dead that have been long dead more than the living that are still alive."[2]

Even when man has that which seems to be good, he is sure to find bitter mingled with the sweet. Koheleth says, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy upon men: a man to whom God giveth riches, wealth and honour, so that he taketh nothing for himself of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not the power to eat thereof, but an alien eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease."[3]

It is indeed. We do not know what particular malady Koheleth had in mind, but it was certainly a pernicious sickness that made it impossible for man to enjoy the good food that he had stored up in abundance. The very wealth of eatables was according to the received teaching a sign of God's gracious favour, but the possibly chronic dyspepsia which made the eating an ordeal of misery does not fit into the scheme.

But Koheleth's keen observations have opened other views withholden from one whose vision is dulled by overmuch theory: "All this have I seen in my days of vanity; there is a righteous man that perisheth by his righteousness, and there is a wicked

[1] Eccl. 4:1. [2] *Ibid.*, 4:2. [3] *Ibid.*, 6:1 ff.

man that prolongeth his life by his evil doing." [1] Koheleth sees further that righteousness may result in disaster, and wickedness may become a boomerang; this observation leads him to give advice, which is certainly not matched elsewhere in the Bible: "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?" [2] This counsel suggests a *via media* hard to comprehend.

There can be no mistaking his contention against the common teaching. "There is a vanity," he says, "which is done upon the earth, that there are righteous men unto whom it happeneth according to the works of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the works of the righteous." [3] The wires are crossed so that evil falls upon the upright, and good upon the wicked. There is therefore no motive for virtue, "inasmuch as there is one fortune to all, to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the bad; to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; then it is with the good, as the sinner; with him that sweareth, as with him that feareth an oath." [4]

Koheleth did not approve of these conditions; he

[1] Eccl. 7:15. [2] *Ibid.*, 7:16 ff. [3] *Ibid.*, 8:14.

[4] Eccl. 9:2. "To the bad" is added from the Greek; it is necessary to complete the pairs. The text requires emendation at the beginning also.

looked upon them as evil, but he saw that they abounded in the world just the same, and he honestly recorded what he saw. His philosophy, or if we like his theology, for, attenuated as it is, he has a theology, is based upon experience, an experience carrying him through many years and through varied phases of life. He can find nothing in earthly phenomena to support the old doctrine of good and evil, but much that militated against it. He finds nothing that makes it worth while to struggle for uprightness as the supreme end in life. All that is left for a man he puts in few words: "Behold that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink and to enjoy good in all his labour, wherein he laboureth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion." [1]

In the book of Koheleth it is true that there are brief passages, interspersed here and there, which sound a different note, a note as orthodox as the most exacting Hebrew theologian could ask. But they are plainly glosses added to make the teaching of the book more acceptable to an age that valued the book, but did not approve altogether of its teaching. Even if one were skeptical of this critical verdict, it is true all the same that Koheleth, whatever else he may be thought to have said, did utter all the words I have quoted. And it is difficult to see any slightest sign of a retractation.

Moreover, Koheleth was not the only one who

[1] Eccl. 5:18.

propounded what to some of the greatest earlier Hebrew teachers, and for that matter to many of the later ones, would have been strange doctrine. The great Hebrew classic on the subject of good and evil is the book of Job. This book becomes all the more interesting and significant as we realize that it is not all the work of one hand or of one age. It is a collection of literature in poetry and prose, upon the important subject of reward and punishment. And yet the parts are not bound together so much by a common theme, as by a common person. All the contributors, viewing the subject from various angles, use as the peg upon which to hang their doctrine the person of Job. And much as they differ about other things they agree in these two points, that Job was a great sufferer and yet was a righteous man, points which are hard to reconcile with the received doctrine.[1]

At this point, however, I do not propose to take up the book of Job as a whole, but only to touch one of its several parts, reserving the others for consideration later. The colloquies[2] offer us material that fits in at this point. These comprise the three cycles of speeches between Job and those who came to comfort and stayed to reproach. It is desirable as we open this poem—one of the greatest in all literature—to rid our minds of all preconceived ideas as to the character of Job or as to the nature

[1] The speeches of Elihu, Chaps. 32–37, may be regarded as an exception.

[2] Chaps. 3–31.

and cause of his woes. We must let the poet tell his own story, for the Job of this poem and the Job of other sections of the book have but little in common.

Job opens the discussion by fiercely cursing the day he was born, and bitterly regretting that he had not died at birth. In no more forcible way could the reader be made to realize that Job's condition was far from happy. We are not, however, left to inference, for before he ends his fierce cry he pictures his own condition:

> Why is light given to one in travail,
> And life unto the bitter in soul?
> Who long for death, but it cometh not,
> And dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
> Who rejoice exceedingly
> And are glad if they find the grave.
> For my sighing cometh before my food,
> And my groanings are poured out like water.
> I was not at ease, neither had I quiet, nor had
> I rest; yet turmoil came.[1]

In many places in the course of the controversy Job dwells upon his woes. To get an adequate conception from his own lips, I will quote further, not scrupling to accept some improved readings of the text:

> I am made to possess months of misery,
> And wearisome nights are appointed unto me.
> When I lie down, I say
> How long before the day, when I shall arise?

[1] Job 3:20 ff.

And I am full of sleepless tossings unto the dawn.
My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust;
My skin is broken, and become loathsome.[1]

When I say, my bed shall comfort me,
My couch shall ease my complaint;
Then thou scarest me with dreams,
And terrifiest me through visions;
So that my soul chooseth strangling,
And death rather than my woes.[2]

Restless and seemingly endless nights are indeed hard to endure; and when to sleep means to suffer the torment of nightmares the cup is pretty full.

But the pain of the nights was surpassed by the agony of the days:

My brethren are far removed from me,
And my friends are quite estranged.
My kinsfolk have ceased to know me,
And my acquaintances have forgotten me.
And my maids count me for a stranger;
I am an alien in their sight.
I call to my servant, and he makes no answer,
Though I entreat him with my mouth.
My breath is strange to my wife,
And I am loathsome to the children of my body.[3]
Even young children despise me;
If I arise, they speak against me.
All my familiar friends abhor me,
And they whom I loved are turned against me.[4]

[1] Job 7 : 3–5. [2] *Ibid.*, 7 : 13–15.

[3] R. V. has "children of mine own mother." "Mother" is a harmonistic interpolation to agree with the prologue, where it is implied that Job's children had been slain.

[4] Job 19 : 13–19.

The evils which Job himself pictures here and in numerous other passages are quite different from those enumerated in the prologue; and they certainly strike more deeply into the heart. For here we are dealing not with the evils which affect the body, but those which touch the soul. No wonder Job pleads: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, my friends; For the hand of God hath touched me."[1]

And what response did the friends, Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar, make to the sufferer's touching appeal? The prologue says that they came to comfort; and that when they first saw Job they were so moved by the sight of his woe, that they uttered no word for seven days. When the long silence was broken, their remarks prove to be no balm for a wounded soul. They exhort and reprove and admonish and irritate, so that after each one of their speeches, Job is more reckless and fierce and outspoken than he was before. And being what they were they could do no other than they did. They may have been fond of Job; they may have honoured him; they may have believed in him; they may have been very old friends; they certainly desired his good. But they were dominated by a theology which had the central place in their minds. They looked at Job's case from the standpoint of a hard and fast theory, and to be true to that, to explain the pain they saw in accordance with their convictions, they were con-

[1] Job 19:21.

strained to wound their friend. At first they broached the matter kindly and tenderly, but as Job maintained his own position with ever growing intensity, they gradually dropped all gentleness, and drove the goad into his soul.

The theory that controlled them was the received explanation of good and evil. They saw Job's pain, and with irresistible logic they reasoned to his sin. As the disciples saw the man suffering from congenital blindness and confidently interpreted it to mean that somebody had sinned, so the antagonists of Job looked upon his tormented flesh and his agonized soul, and believed that God had brought all the evil as a punishment for sin. From that point of view they labour for the victim's good.

Their efforts on Job's behalf pass through three stages. First, they appeal to him to turn to God, assuring him that then God will bring him relief. Second, they depict over and over again the inevitably disastrous fate of the wicked, stating the doctrine in general terms, but expecting that Job himself will see the application, and act accordingly. And third, they charge him directly with sins of his own commission. Because he had shown no tendency to yield to their gentler pleas, they try at the end the sterner measure of direct personal accusation.

Now Job does not quite plead for himself the absolute innocence asserted of him in the prologue. In a long review of his whole life, he reverts to the

days of his happiness when he was held in honour of all men, and declares that the popular esteem was due to his generous conduct. He fed the hungry and clothed the naked and pleaded the cause of the stranger.[1] Sometimes he asserts boldly that no fault can be found in him.[2] Sometimes he admits that in spite of all his good works he cannot make a claim of perfection,[3] but he seems to imply that his errors are only such as the hot words that are forced from his lips by the enormity of his pain.[4] This point is important, for Job insists that his sin, such as it is, is the result of his suffering, and not its cause. The pain led to wrong, not the wrong to pain.

In any case he urges that his moral state is not the real point. The vital thing to consider is the excruciating agony he has so long been enduring. He feels that he is a helpless victim in the hands of God. God is mightier than man and the weak has no chance against the strong, even when the strong is God. So he cries:

> How can man be just with God?
> If he be pleased to contend with him,
> He cannot answer him one of a thousand.[5]
>
> Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not:
> He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.
> Behold, he seizeth, who can hinder him?
> Who will say unto him, what doest thou?[6]

[1] Chap. 29. [2] Job 6:24; 10:5–7; 16:17; 23:10 ff.
[3] *Ibid.*, 7:20 ff.; 19:4. [4] *Ibid.*, 6:2 ff.
[5] *Ibid.*, 9:2 ff. [6] *Ibid.*, 9:11 ff.

Still more energetically does he bring charges against the author of his woes:

God delivereth me to the ungodly,
And casteth me into the hands of the wicked.
I was at ease, and he brake me asunder;
Yea, he seized me by the neck, and dashed me to pieces;
He hath also set me up to serve as his target.[1]

Job asserts the abject helplessness of man; he goes so far as to look upon God as one would look upon an irresponsible despot:

For he is not a man like me, that I might answer him,
That we should come together in judgment.
There is no umpire between us,
That might lay his hand upon us both. [2]

Finally, Job squarely meets the issue raised by his self-constituted judges, and flatly contradicts their whole contention:

It is all one; therefore I say,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.
When the scourge slays suddenly,
He mocks at the calamity of the innocent.[3]

If I wash myself with snow,
And make my hands never so clean;
Yet wilt thou plunge me into the ditch,
And mine own clothes shall abhor me.[4]

[1] Job 16 : 11 ff.
[2] *Ibid.*, 9 : 32 ff.
[3] *Ibid.*, 9 : 22 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, 9 : 30 ff

Still more impressive are the passages in which he describes the result of his observations of the actual conditions of men in the world; these all tend to prove that the wicked get along just as well as the good. I quote but a single specimen among the many the book affords:

Wherefore can the wicked prolong life,
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power?
Their seed is established in their sight,
And their offspring before their eyes.
Their houses are free from danger,
Neither is the rod of God upon them.
Their bull gendereth, and faileth not;
Their cow bringeth forth, and casteth not her calf.
They send forth their little ones like a flock,
And their children dance.
They sing to the timbrel and harp,
And rejoice at the sound of the pipe.
They spend their days in prosperity,
And in a moment go down to Sheol.
And they say unto God, depart from us;
For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
What is the Almighty that we should serve him?
And what should we gain if we entreated him?[1]

We need not wonder that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were shocked at Job's language. On the other hand there can be no doubt that the author of this great poem uses Job to express his own convictions. He might not endorse all the bitter words he puts into his hero's mouth, for he is writing a tragedy, not an essay. Yet he does mean to con-

[1] Job 21: 7–15.

tend for two points. First, that Job's sufferings are too severe to be accounted for by any wrong of which he can be convicted;[1] hence he makes his hero dwell repeatedly on the enormity of his troubles. From the standpoint of justice there must be some proportion between a sin and its punishment. And secondly he insists that God sends good and evil upon man without moral discrimination; that not only does the beneficent sun shine upon the just and the unjust, but also that the destructive storms involve both in a common ruin.

It is clear that there is no longer unanimity of opinion among the thinkers of Israel. The venerable doctrine of good and evil is certainly no longer held by all. Some hold uncritically to old opinion, but others use their eyes and their reason, and to them the received doctrine has been weighed in the balances of the pragmatic test and is found wanting. Some writers go no further than this negative result. Others who are equally unsatisfied by the old view look in other directions for further light. In due time we shall follow them in their search.

[1] In marked contrast is a confession like that in Psalm 38 in which the sufferer frankly acknowledges that his extremely painful disease is the direct result of his own sin.

# IV

## A Rift Between Pain and Sin

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## A RIFT BETWEEN PAIN AND SIN

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you.*—1 PETER 4 : 12.

THE post-exilic age was a period in which there was generally much disappointment among the Jews. No matter whether we think of the community or of the individual we realize that for the most of this time conditions were less rosy than their prophets led them to expect. The State and for a while the Church struggled for a feeble existence; and the individual struggled, and sometimes almost in vain, for a livelihood. The despondent usually accepted the traditional explanation and believed that their woes came from God, but it was becoming less easy to explain the divine ways, because, as in Job's case, the evil was too great. It was like an angry father cruelly beating a child for a minor offense. The beating soon ceases to be a reasonable punishment for wrong and becomes an outlet for stormy passions.

There arose another element which complicated

the situation. After the introduction of the law as the guide for conduct, there began a tendency towards a feeling of self-righteousness, an attitude that reaches its culmination in the Pharisaic spirit of religious superiority, a condition familiar to the reader of the Gospels. It is difficult to love one's neighbour as oneself, and it is difficult ever to say that it is perfectly done. It is relatively easy to observe a code of law, and it is possible to know when one has done it. We live as Christians under moral obligations that we meet so imperfectly that we deem it expedient to make a daily practise of confession. And we know that our penitential words accurately describe the pitiable failures of our imperfect lives. On the other hand we live as citizens of a state, and as such are subject to an immense body of laws, national, state and municipal, and we only need to cross the Hudson River to become amenable to still different civil regulations. Yet it requires no extraordinary effort to keep out of jail. Indeed it is amazing how easy it is to obey all these complicated codes. So far as the State is concerned, we need make no confession, for we have done no wrong; so far as the civil laws go, we are guilty of no infractions and we can confidently assert our innocence.

No less did the select congregation of Israel feel that they had observed the sacred law, and so were guiltless. It is worth while quoting such a protestation of innocence:

All this has come upon us; yet have we not
forgotten thee,
Neither have we been false to thy covenant.
Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way.[1]

Now according to the received doctrine a people who could honestly make that assertion of righteousness ought to be "flourishing like a green bay tree." But they were not. The poem from which I have quoted is a pathetic recital of the many evils which have befallen an innocent people, and an expression of their wonder that God does not act now as He did in the days of old. There is abundant pain, but sin fails as an adequate explanation.

We are not limited, however, to the professions of the faithful, sincere and honest as we should regard their confessions. In the early days of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes many Jews sealed their fidelity to the law by their blood. It was made a capital offense to possess a copy of the sacred law, and the Jews would not give us their Scriptures to save their lives.[2] When the choice was given to worship strange gods in an abhorrent fashion or be put to death, they unhesitatingly elected death rather than be false to their God.[3] They believed that it was wrong to do any work on the Sabbath day, and fighting was work.

[1] Ps. 44:17 f. In part at least this feeling of righteousness may be due to the fact that the law provided for sacrificial atonement for sin.

[2] 1 Mac. 1:57.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1:63.

Therefore when the foe attacked them, they made no resistance, and were cut down where they stood.[1] Finer devotion to a rule of life is unknown in all human history. The godly died, and the wicked conquered.

However, it is always possible to avoid the conclusion that the old theology is at fault in cases like these, for it can be said that the people were not really innocent. The asserted condition of righteousness, and that a righteousness which is of the law, may be questioned. Very well, but theology also required that the guilty should suffer. Now there can be no doubt of the facts in the case of the wicked. It is easy to be mistaken in our estimate of a supposedly upright man's character; it often happens that one we have accounted good proves to be a scoundrel. But it is possible to pick out a sinner with certainty. Now to find such an unquestioned sinner leading a happy and prosperous life is fatal to the doctrine, and such cases may be found in all ages of the world.

It was a discovery of the happy state of the wicked that nearly made shipwreck of the faith of a pious Hebrew soul, and would have done so, but for his ability to find refuge in a modification of the old doctrine. The one to whom I refer is the philosopher and poet who was the author of the seventy-third Psalm. He recites at length what he has seen of the prosperity of the wicked.[2] He is convinced that the people whose career he described

[1] 1 Mac. 2:34 ff. [2] Vss. 3–12.

were really bad, and we need not question his judgment, but he was amazed to perceive that their lives were filled with every manner of good. Their experience contrasts strangely with his own:

> Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart,
> And washed mine hands in innocency;
> For all the day long have I been plagued,
> And chastened every morning.[1]

No wonder that his faith was shaken as this riddle confronted him. He tells us how he had long sought in vain for a solution, and then how the matter was cleared up:

> When I thought how I might know this,
> It was grievous in my eyes,
> Until I went into the sanctuary of God,
> And considered their latter end.[2]

Then he tells us the solution which came to him in the temple:

> Surely thou settest them in slippery places;
> Thou castest them down to destruction.
> How are they become a desolation in a moment!
> Calamity brings them to a complete end.
> As a dream when one awaketh,
> So the Lord when aroused will despise their image.[3]

The main point by which the faith was restored is that due punishment is merely deferred; that while the wicked may prosper for a while, his good

[1] Vss. 13 f. [2] Vss. 16 f. [3] Vss. 18-20.

days will prove to be transitory, and overwhelming evil will overtake him in the end. As another Psalmist put it: an ungodly man may spread himself like a cedar of Lebanon, but one will pass by, and lo! he is gone; he may be sought, but he cannot be found.[1] Incidentally we have met this conception before, and we shall meet it again, but here we find it put forth to relieve a situation that was becoming a menace to religious faith.

The development of this idea of deferred punishment went on in Christian teaching, but even a cursory examination of that line would carry us too far afield now. The idea has been pretty commonly held, and was eagerly welcomed as a support for the old theology. Yet it is plain that in the form here presented this theory offers no final settlement, for we find a valid rejoinder to it long ago put into the mouth of the harassed Job. Job evidently has in mind a case slightly different from that of the psalmist; but it is germane to our purpose, for his subject is postponed punishment.

> How oft is the lamp of the wicked put out,
> That their calamity comes upon them?
> [Ye say] God reserves his trouble for his sons.
> Let him recompense it unto himself that he may know it:
> Let his own eyes see his misfortune,
> And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
> For what's his care for his house when he's dead,
> When the number of his months is finished?[2]

[1] Ps. 37:35 f. [2] Job 21:17, 19–21.

The point is well taken, for while we could not wholly endorse the position "after me the deluge," yet it is true that punishment that is overlong postponed loses its effect as an incentive to good conduct.

Moreover, the difficulty lies deeper still for there remains the question in regard to the facts. Is it quite certain that a person's wickedness will overtake him before life's course is run? The psalmist whom I have already quoted contradicts himself, for he says of the godless, "there are no pangs in their death";[1] that is, they do reach the end of their life without being overtaken by the evil that is due. And Job asserted that the wicked were free from the long-drawn-out misery which was slowly taking his life away. And what they saw we, too, can see. Trouble is sometimes laid up for the wicked, but it is equally certain that it is laid up for the righteous too.

We must not forget, however, that there is truth in all these various contentions of the sacred writers. Though they did not grasp the whole aspect of the subject, they do not fix their faith on anything that is altogether wrong. It is true that God created the snake which lurks in the brook as well as the speckled beauty which it greedily devours. Bacteria sour cider into vinegar, and bacteria produce pneumonia. It is often quite clear that we

[1] Ps. 73:4. Unfortunately the text is so corrupt that too much stress must not be laid upon the words; however, the principal points are clear.

are richly rewarded for doing right, and heavily punished for doing wrong. The soldier who bravely does his duty receives the *croix de guerre;* and the one who cowardly deserts his hard-pressed comrades faces the firing squad. Or to leave out human influence, we read vicious literature and our mind is poisoned. In spite of all the turmoil in the world, we hold fast to our religious faith, and in the day of personal anguish we have an anchor that holds. Moreover, often the penalty comes only after many days. Sometimes it awaits and lights upon another generation. Many times it passes over the heads of the guilty and falls heavily upon the innocent. The British authorities did not heed the warning of Lord Roberts their prophet, and as a consequence thousands of guiltless English soldiers sleep in France while their wives and children and parents mourn in England. We slept peacefully without reserve oil in our vessels, and now I fear that we shall have to pay in blood and treasure. It appears that our preparation has been very lax in some vital features, and for this procrastination too we and our allies will be called upon to pay. The price of deficiency in artillery is the needless sacrifice of human lives.

But there is a weak spot in the argument nevertheless; for the law does not always hold; the principle is not of universal application. It seems to be true if we carefully pick out our illustrations; but the world has been on the quest for a law that will explain all occurrences of good and evil. If

we undertake to apply the old Hebrew law to every case we are baffled. For we find that yellow fever in Cuba was eradicated by sanitary science, and not by piety. The success of a surgical operation depends upon the doctor's skill, and not upon the moral character of either himself or his patient. Disease will attack the saint as well as the sinner. It is doubtful if fasting and praying will invariably bring rain to a parched earth, though Joel apparently thought it would; and even if rain be thus produced, it will water the ground of the atheist as well as that of the believer, of him that fasts and prays and of him that frets and swears.

I do not pretend to be unprejudiced in regard to the great war. The neutrality that I started with was not of a high order, and such as it was, it did not last long. My sympathy and my judgment enrolled me early with those who are now our allies. But to put the case mildly, it would have been difficult for the most impartial judge in the fall of 1916 to have pronounced the Germans superior to the British in piety. And yet the British were thwarted of a very promising goal by the endless downpour of the rains. Their attack on the Somme was checked; the mud became so deep that it was almost impossible to get up supplies; and the enemy secured a much desired respite. Is the Kaiser right? Are the forces of God working on his side? Were the autumn rains an answer to the imperial prayers?

The Hebrews were aware of the difficulty; espe-

cially as they realized that as a people they suffered more than other nations. They at least worshipped Jahveh, while other peoples worshipped idols, and yet their fidelity did not save them from calamity. Indeed, it often was the cause of additional pain. Touching indeed is the cry coming not out of vain lips:

> **Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;**
> **We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**[1]

In their extremity they turned to a solution which involved a radical shifting of the ground. For we find evil explained, not as a punishment, but as a discipline; not to chastise, but to train; not to break down, but to build up; not as a sign of God's displeasure, but as a token of His faith.

It is true that the two conceptions of evil as a punishment and as a discipline may lie close together. The same misfortunes may be explained on either of these principles. Sometimes the punishment which results from wickedness is looked upon as attaining its end in the punishment itself, irrespective of the consequences. If a man has been bad and his badness impels him to knock out a neighbour's tooth, the case is ended when one of the culprit's teeth is extracted, though he may remain just as bad as ever. The State requires a convicted criminal to remain in jail as long as his sentence imposes, and then the State must release him, even though he may have become tenfold more

[1] Ps. 44 : 22.

the child of hell than he was before. In such cases evil is present as a punishment, but as a discipline there is a complete failure.

A higher conception of the purpose of evil is found here and there in the Hebrew literature. The evil which exists is explained on a nobler principle than vindictiveness. Amos, for example, recites a series of disasters which God had brought upon Israel one after another, and he reveals the divine purpose in a refrain which runs like a golden strand through the whole dark web: "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jahveh."[1] Jahveh sought to bring Israel to repentance and to this end sent famine into the land, and when this failed to move the people's hearts, He sent other evils in turn. God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked; He did not inflict punishment to satisfy a law or His own craving for vengeance, but as a discipline to lead the sinner to righteousness.[2]

We are led away from the idea of punishment in Nathan's words to David. However terrible were the king's sins, God had no design merely to measure out woe to him; but to let him go altogether free would have served as an occasion for the enemies of Jahveh (the irreligious) to blaspheme, and to that end the child conceived in sin must die.[3] We are led away from the idea of punishment in an interpretation of the hardship imposed on Israel in the long sojourn in the desert regions where the

[1] Amos 4:6 f. [2] Cf. Ps. 11; Prov. 3:11 f.
[3] 2 Sam. 12:14.

conditions of life were so severe that the people were willing to endure again the slavery in Egypt in order that they might at least have food to eat. "Thou shalt remember," we read in Deuteronomy,[1] "all the way Jahveh thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble thee, *to prove thee*, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jahveh." This is a very great advance on the idea that Israel was condemned to spend those terrible years in the desert because they were frightened by the report of the spies, and must be chastised severely because of their lack of courage to meet the enemy.[2] Jahveh must find out whether they can bear hunger and privation, He must know whether there is the stuff in them of which nations are made, before He can send them across the Jordan to face the Canaanites.[3]

But we get a step further than this when we hear a much tried soul sum up the result of his painful experience thus: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes."[4] Even here the two conceptions of discipline and punishment lie close together; there is not a com-

[1] Deut. 8:2f.
[2] Num. 14:20 ff.
[3] Cf. Judg. 3:1-4.
[4] Ps. 119:71.

plete dissociation of the affliction from sin, for just before this confession of the disciplinary value of his pain, the penitent suggests the punitive note: "before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe thy word."[1] Indeed such a dissociation is hard to find in the Old Testament. If grace abounded, sin did much more abound; and it appears that the holy men of old were more concerned to find a restraint from sin than the cause of woe.

Perhaps we get as near as we may to the dissociation in certain passages of the book of Job. The speeches of Elihu are beyond doubt a late addition to the book, and the writer evidently intended to make a contribution of new material by which to silence him who arrogantly reproached the Author of his being. Elihu does not really add to the discussion much that is fresh or important, but he does say this:

> He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction,
> And openeth his ear by adversity.[2]

Of the same tenor is a passage, somewhat obscure in meaning and corrupt in text it is true, and yet its import cannot be mistaken.

> If there be with him an angel,
> An interpreter, one among a thousand,
> And he shall show unto man what is his fault;
> Then God is gracious unto him, and saith,
> Deliver him from going down into the pit,
> I have found a ransom for him.[3]

[1] Ps. 119:67. [2] Job 36:15. [3] *Ibid.*, 33:23f.

God is served by thousands of good angels,[1] as well as by an occasional evil spirit, and the office of these angels is to save frail man from destruction, to bring good out of evil.

In his first futile attempt to soothe Job's pain, Eliphaz had broached the same idea:

> Happy is the man whom God correcteth;
> Then despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.
> For he maketh sore and bindeth up;
> He woundeth, and his hands make whole.[2]

And therein he just missed a chance to make a real contribution to the subject with which he was dealing. Of this utterance Dean Bradley happily says, "It is a fruitful thought, this corrective and remedial power of suffering."[3] We regret as we get this precious bit, that one of Job's counsellors did not follow such a promising lead, but instead relapsed straightway to the idea of punishment.

We cannot get the full measure of relief from the old dogma until we make the dissociation from sin at all events in some cases complete, and see that pain and disease and poverty and affliction may be crosses which may come to the good and pure, and by bearing which they may pass from weakness to strength. We may not see, nay, we may refuse to believe that God especially sent the

[1] The word may be rendered *angel* or *messenger*. If a man is meant, the sense of the passage is not affected.

[2] Job 5:17 f. [3] "Lectures on Job," p. 63.

evil, and yet we may realize that the evil is our opportunity. We may struggle to keep evil away, but when it comes—for come it must—we are not driven to look upon God as our enemy; for it may always be that He is never so much our Friend as when we suffer. "They that are whole need no physician, but they that are sick." When we are most sick the divine Physician is most ready to heal.

One of the most advanced ideas of evil we find anywhere in the Old Testament is in a story written of the days of the early patriarchs, and written in the prime of Israel's national vigour. And there we find one spirit who can see in calamity something more potent and far reaching than a vindictive punishment from an offended God.

And it was veritably a real calamity which befell Joseph, for of his fortunes I would speak. He was whisked away from his peaceful life; he was stripped of the robe which marked his dignity as the first-born of the favourite wife; he was compelled to do the hard work of a slave in a foreign land; he was accused of an outrageous crime, and he was sent to prison; above all—I use the phrase advisedly in view of his own words—he was separated from his younger brother, and was denied his former position of friend and protector. All that ill fortune was brought upon him by a series of sins. His father was indiscreet and showed him marked partiality; he himself became

provokingly ambitious; his brethren were seized of a mad jealousy so that they were ready to murder him, but were led to compromise and to sell him as a slave to a caravan of traders.

When those brethren a few years later went to Egypt to procure food, and awoke to the fact that the high officer who had dealt so harshly with them was the brother they had so cruelly wronged, we can easily believe that their terror was not feigned. If conscience doth make cowards of us all, the sons of Jacob had adequate stimulus for white faces and shaking knees. How greatly they must have been amazed that Joseph uttered no word of reproach, and even put a magnanimous construction on the whole transaction. And in his construction, which was aimed chiefly to allay their fears, he incidentally makes a striking contribution to Biblical theology. "And now be not grieved," he says, "nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me, but God." [1]

The famine from which Jacob and his family were suffering might easily have been explained as God's answer to the crime of Jacob's sons. But

[1] Gen. 45 : 5 ff. Skinner notes the profoundly religious conviction which recognizes the beneficent working out of the providence of God as a characteristic of the Joseph narrative ("Genesis, I. C. C.," p. 487).

Joseph looks upon the crime as the means by which a kindly providential movement was started. He was given his great chance as the result of his brothers' sins. The ambitious dreams of his youth, dreams which had freshly aroused the animosity of his brothers, were come true; and his dreams were fulfilled because they had done him a great wrong. Sin abounded, but grace did much more abound. Man did a great evil, but out of the evil God had wrought a great good. God did not create the evil, but He used it for His own great ends. Surely we reach a higher point in the progress of the doctrine here, for it approaches the plane of a great saying of our Lord's: "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents [that he was born blind], but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."[1]

There is another story of suffering that we must study, and it is a suffering far beyond Joseph's. The story I mean is in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Our study is not without difficulty, for to say nothing of the almost baffling problem of interpretation, we are often in doubt as to what to interpret. The text is corrupted to such a degree that the student is often in a state of uncertainty, and sometimes of despair. But it is not imposed upon us to work out every detail of the text, for it will serve our purpose to lay hold of one feature of the doctrine of the passage, and for that there is sufficient material upon which we can confidently

[1] John 9 : 3.

rely. On opening our Bible to this immortal piece, we feel that we should remove our shoes from our feet, for we are to stand on preëminently holy ground. This passage represents the highest stage of Messianic prophecy, and its revelations are peculiarly sacred and intimate. The passage is itself an interpretation of an experience, and if we can comprehend the experience and grasp measurably the interpretation, it will not be very difficult to grasp the essential points.

First, there is present a scene in which the veil is lifted a bit in advance, that we may be able to endure the tragedy because we know how it will end: "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at him (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men) so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him: for that which hath not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand."[1] The tale to be told is such that the writer does not wonder that it shall seem incredible: "Who will believe our message? and to whom will the arm of Jahveh be revealed?"[2]

Next we come to the description of the sufferer: "For he grew up before us as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no comeliness; and when we look on him, there is no beauty

[1] Isa. 52: 13–15. [2] *Ibid.*, 53: 1.

that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of pain, and acquainted with sickness: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not."[1] Then comes the easy and usual explanation of this frightful state: "And we did think him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Jahveh saw fit to crush him with sickness."[2] The sufferer was no ordinary man. Yet so far as his outward appearance went, he was one of the least of the sons of men. But he was nevertheless the servant of God, one in whose presence kings would stand in silent awe. Yet his pain was interpreted by the bystanders even as Job's friends explained his pain; for inasmuch as they thought that God's hand was laid heavily upon His servant, they could only believe that the visitation was due to the servant's sins.

The most careless observer of the servant's life could not be other than deeply impressed by noting the fine way in which he bore his pain: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, but he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."[3] The sufferings continued until relief finally came in the only way in which it can sometimes come: "By oppression and judgment he was taken away. . . . He poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors. . . . They buried him in a

[1] Isa. 53: 2 f. [2] Vss. 4, 10. [3] Ver. 7.

grave with the wicked, for he died with the evil doers."[1]

Upon his dust stood up his vindicator. How the eyes of those who had so harshly misjudged him were opened we are not told. The truth must have come to them with a shock. It is to their everlasting credit that they frankly confess their error, and give free expression to the revelation that had been vouchsafed them: "Surely he hath taken up our sickness, and he has borne our pains. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our misdeeds; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way; and Jahveh hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."[2]

It is rather startling to read that the sight of suffering raised a consciousness of sin in the minds of those who looked on. It was the usual course among the Jews—and at first sight this case was no exception—for the bystanders who beheld one in pain to regard him as a sinner. It is a new thing under the sun for those who see a man in agony thus to become aware that they themselves are the sinners. St. Paul voted with those who condemned St. Stephen to death, and he believed him guilty; but after he had seen the martyr die,

[1] Vss. 8, 9, 12. I adopt *evil doers* in place of the meaningless *rich* of the Hebrew text.

[2] Vss. 4 ff.

he was never the same man again. The righteousness that had come by the law he had eagerly sought and found, and he counted it a great prize; but when he saw the righteousness shine in a dying man's countenance so that his face was the face of an angel, he saw a finer grade of righteousness than any law could offer, and he had no rest or peace until he was on the quest of the same kind of righteousness. St. Paul went out to see the guilty Stephen die; he came back to see the guilty Paul quickened to a new life.

To come back to the story of the martyred servant, we note a great advance in the interpretation of pain. For it is now plain that suffering may be vicarious. One who has done no violence, in whose mouth there is no deceit, may suffer beyond man's power to describe. For he may take upon himself the punishment that would otherwise fall on his fellows. He will die that they may live. The innocent will suffer that the guilty may be spared. This conclusion is no mere fancy. It is demonstrable in human experience. Any man may at times suffer for the sins of others, suffer that they may not suffer. It is a true law, and a high law, but neither is this a universal law, for it will explain but relatively few cases of pain, and so our quest is not ended.

The creator of the character of Job represents him as very confident in regard to certain aspects of his case, and very well satisfied with his knowledge. Job insists that the blows which have fallen

upon him are too heavy to be accounted for by such trifling misdeeds as may be chargeable to an honourable man. As we have seen, he does not hesitate to say rather harsh things about his Creator. One of the causes of Job's fierce outcries is the feeling that he cannot get a hearing; that God has tried, convicted and sentenced him so to speak *in camera*, and has thus denied him the universally accorded privilege of speaking for himself. That privilege or right Job earnestly desires. From their first word he was convinced that it was useless to argue with Eliphaz and the rest, for he and they did not think common thoughts, and hardly spoke a common language. To him there were certain fundamental facts which those who laboured with him could not be made to see, and without recognition of which all discussion becomes as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

But Job felt sure that it would be worth while to plead his cause with God. In spite of the difficulty of which he hints, and which apparently at one stage he felt, that here was no referee to decide the issue between God and himself, he yet wanted the chance to plead his cause directly before the tribunal of heaven. As the case advances that plea for a hearing rises more plaintively and is pressed more insistently. If I dare put it so, it seems to dawn upon him that he may cry to God against God, that after all God Himself may prove to be the umpire he so passionately seeks. There is a deep pathos in the most prolonged of these

cries; there are signs of a rewakening faith; and we see the one who walks in darkness turning more than ever to the one sure source of light. Nothing could be more touching and beautiful than this:

Oh, that I knew where I might find him!
That I might come even to his seat!
I would set my cause in order before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
I would know the words which he would answer,
And understand what he would say unto me.
Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
Nay; but he would give heed unto me.
He would establish justice and reason with me;
So should I be delivered forever from my judgment.
Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him;
On the left hand I seek, but I cannot find him;
I turn to the right hand but I cannot see him.[1]

The sufferer feels confident that under the conditions he asks he could plead his cause to understanding ears, and that the omnipotent and omniscient God would not attempt to crush him with authority, as the human controversialists had, but would let him understand the divine attitude, the reason for God's strange acts. His friends had bidden him to turn to God, but Job declares that long before they had come to challenge him, he

[1] Job 23: 3–9, accepting some suggested emendations.

had tried to find God, and had persistently kept up his quest; but it was all in vain. Seek where he would, to him as long before to Saul, there was no answer from heaven.[1]

Many a person has prayed repeatedly, and finding no answer, at last gives up all hope of an answer, and all too probably, all faith in prayer. But in truth there is always at some time and in some way an answer to every real prayer. For God hears all supplications, and for Him to hear is to reply. Just when Job, the sorely tried sufferer, abandons all hope of a hearing before the one tribunal where justice is done, storm-clouds begin to darken the sky, the wind rushes over the face of the earth, and out of the tempest there comes in a divine harmony the voice of Jahveh.

If the speeches of Jahveh are one of the various contributions to the original work of Job, the author added them because he believed that he had an important contribution to make. If a part of them—for some are unquestionably from another hand[2]—were composed by the author of the great poem, we should surely feel that he had reserved his weightiest words for these speeches. It is a

[1] One of the most pathetic poems in the Psalter is one in which a great sufferer cries constantly to God for deliverance from his troubles, but the poem closes without relief or a sign that God hears (Ps. 88).

[2] Some parts of these speeches must be additions from a later hand. The long descriptions of the hippopotamus and the crocodile (Job 40 : 15–41 : 34) fit in very poorly with the rest of this section.

daring challenge to preface a message with the formula "thus saith Jahveh." But the prophet did it, not because he had authority to exercise the prerogatives of God, or because he looked upon himself as a mere passive machine, but because he was willing to utter the truth, because he eagerly sought God's word, and because he believed that God would use him to His own great ends. As a writer puts these speeches in the mouth of God, we are led to look in them for the last word of Hebrew wisdom on the subject of evil.

If we take up the speeches of Jahveh under the influence of this prepossession, the first reading is pretty sure to result in disappointment. For they say no word about this vexing problem of evil, and in the inferences we are compelled to draw they are as far from orthodoxy as the gloomy outpourings of Koheleth. The attitude towards the central figure is equally surprising; for while there is no railing accusation of Job, there is here and there a rather biting irony, which naturally would have stung the sufferer more than the direct charges of Eliphaz, Zophar and Bildad.

The speeches are merely a catalogue of certain manifestations of God's work in the natural world. The earth, the sea and the sky, the beasts and the fishes and the birds, reveal many phenomena which are universally explained as originating with God. There is one feature that they have in common: they are beyond the power and comprehension of man. The moral is disclosed in a single question

put to the one who had been so confident of his ability to show the justice of his case:

> Hast thou comprehended the earth in its breadth?
> Declare, if thou knowest how great it is.[1]

The observation of things in the world discloses many facts, hard, cold, simple, every-day facts, and in spite of his boastful knowledge there is not one of them that man can explain. That consideration leads to another question with which the one who ventured to challenge God was confronted:

> Wilt thou even annul my judgment?
> Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?[2]

Good and evil are analogous to the constellations in the sky, or to the storm raging on the earth, or to the habits of the wild animals. For man cannot understand the laws which govern either the one or the other. Sickness and drought and war, like eclipses and snow and protective coloration, are mysteries beyond human comprehension. It is folly then for a man to dispute the justice of God because he demands in vain a solution of the puzzle presented in his own pain. Failure to understand the workings of God's providence does not prove that the ways of God are not equal, to use Ezekiel's happy phrase.

In the speeches of Jahveh the problem is not

[1] Job 38:18. [2] *Ibid.*, 40:8.

solved. No attempt is made to solve it. Indeed its solution is pronounced impossible, and this is final so far as the author is concerned. But because man cannot find the true answer, he is not constrained, or even invited, to accept a false one. However, we are not left with mere negations, cold crumbs of comfort at best, for there is something more satisfying for the hungry seeker after truth.

In the first place Job is never once accused of sin. The only charge brought against him is that he assumes a knowledge beyond what he actually possesses. Job's sufferings are not attributed to his evil deeds. One may therefore feel pain without feeling guilty. One may suffer without drawing as a necessary inference that God is angry. One may be stripped of material wealth and still be rich with God. We dare not again look upon our suffering friend, and because of his pain, denounce him as a sinner. Indeed, we may go much further: the strong may come to envy the weak. The well may look longingly at the sick. One whose withers are not wrung may hold in high honour the one who is in distress. Some one has finely said, "Perhaps in the crowd at Golgotha the mother of Judas envied Mary as she stood below her crucified son."[1] The purest saint may suffer the bitterest affliction, and still may remain a saint. Hebrew thought had built better than it knew. It laid the foundation for a mighty structure. In view of the doctrine now established, the Son of

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1917, p. 600.

God could die on the cross, and still be the Son of God.

And there is another pearl of great price in this piece of ground. All the illustrations used in the speeches of Jahveh show the works of God, and they are all beneficent in character. They show not only God's power, but they also reveal His love. He not only works in the world, but He works also for the good of the world. The conclusion is irresistible. The evil in the world can never be accounted for apart from God. The darkness as well as the light comes from Him. He brings death as surely as He gives life. But in all of His works there is a beneficent purpose. Man's life in its total experiences good and bad is controlled by a loving God, and designed to reach a good end. The appeal is not made to the understanding, but to faith. Man may not be able to comprehend the ways of God, but under his very eyes there is abundant foundation for faith in God.

With this point established we have advanced a long way, if not towards knowledge, at all events towards something better; if not in the direction of philosophy, at all events in the direction of religion. For if we see that we still may have to suffer, we may confidently look for a supporting grace. We shall feel what we sing:

> When we at death must part,
> Not like the world's, our pain.[1]

[1] Church Hymnal, No. 672.

We can bear pain, or we ought to be able to bear pain, if we believe that in our pain God has not forsaken us.

If only we could go on with our investigations in the way opened now, there would be some hope for rest. But we have to follow the course of Hebrew thought, and truth does not often develop steadily in absolutely logical order. It rises and falls like the waves of the sea. And so our next step must take us far away from what appeared to be a straight course to a safe harbour. But we cannot fail to see that there is a gap opening between pain and sin, a gap that will never be wholly closed again.

# V

# A Tendency Towards Dualism

# V

## A TENDENCY TOWARDS DUALISM

*Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, an enemy hath done this.*—MATTHEW 13 : 27b–28a.

IN our studies of good and evil up to the present point we have seen how the Hebrews first accepted a simple comprehensive law that evil was the inevitable divine visitation for sin, and that to meet certain difficulties in the application of the law to life various modifications were made. But back of all the various theories there was an absolute monotheism. Never once is there a hint of a rival to Jahveh. There were differences of opinion on earth, but the counsels of heaven were not divided. There were divisions among the sons of men, but there was unity in the Godhead. So far as we have yet gone, it appears that nothing existed apart from God, and nothing happened save as He willed. The universe was His handiwork, and every force working in the earth or sea or sky was under His direction. The good seed was sown by Him, and the tares were likewise of His planting.

As we pursue our investigations into the Jewish thought of the post-exilic age, we shall find two forces at work which led to a new interpretation

of the presence of evil in the world. One of these has already been mentioned, but must be reviewed in this connection. As a result of the establishment of the law as the rule for human conduct, there arose a consciousness of righteousness on the part of those who kept the law.[1] Thus we can understand a prayer that few of us would dare to pray:

> Preserve my life, for I am godly:[2]
> Defend thy servant that trusteth in thee.[3]

On the ground of such righteousness, and in accord with the established theory, the pious suppliant felt that he was entitled to look for good from heaven. But he was doomed to disappointment, for though the Psalm closes with fervent faith and earnest appeals, there is nevertheless no sign of relief from the distress which the godly petitioner was suffering.

The same combination of piety and pain is forcibly and repeatedly described in the second book of Esdras.[4] The story of creation is related, the creation ending with the production of Adam from whom came the people God had chosen and for

[1] Even when sin was committed the law provided for expiation by sacrifice (*e. g.*, as in Lev. 4 f.). It is singular though how little stress is laid upon this expiatory provision in the literature apart from the law.

[2] The word rendered *godly* became in the Maccabean age the designation of a party in the Jewish Church known by their faithful observance of the law. It has that import in this and other late Psalms.

[3] Ps. 86 : 2.

[4] Called IV Esdras in the Vulgate.

whose sake the world was made. There were other nations which sprang from Adam but were of such a character that God said of them, "they are nothing, and are like unto spittle." "And now," the prophet wonderingly exclaims, "these nations . . . be lords over us. But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy first-born, thy only begotten, and thy fervent lover, are given into their hands. If the world be made for our sakes, why do we not possess the world?"[1]

There was a party in the Jewish nation which felt that they were righteous, and indeed we can readily admit that they devoted themselves with enthusiasm and with rare singleness of purpose to the service of their God. In the way that they deemed most acceptable to Him, they consecrated their lives to Him. In spite of all that whole-hearted devotion, they were by no means immune from the various ills which beset mankind. Things were not working out as the old theory would lead the people to expect.

The other force making for a new interpretation of evil was a move towards a transcendent view of God. There never was a sharp distinction in Hebrew thought between the immanent and the transcendent as there was in the Greek theology on the one hand and the Latin on the other. But nevertheless it is true that in the early days God was conceived as holding peculiarly intimate relations with man. He spoke to man face to face. In

[1] II Esd. 6:54 ff.

the early theophanies the messenger of Jahveh and Jahveh Himself are interchangeable terms.

When we come to the post-exilic period there are here and there indications, often slight indeed, and not easily catalogued, that God is conceived as more remote from man, less easily accessible. God sends angels, and they reveal to man what he may know. The people dwell on what God has done for them in past ages rather than what He is doing in their day, for He does not seem to act in their time. Koheleth puts the matter bluntly, "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."[1]

It is possible that the development of Hebrew thought was influenced by the ideas of other peoples with whom they came in contact, especially of the friendly Persians. But as I see it it has proved easy to exaggerate this influence. At all events, along the line of our study, if there was any such influence at work, Israel did not take over strange doctrines ready made, but assimilated and transformed them, and they became virtually a native product. It may be added that no foreign influence is necessary along the lines of our investigation; for the course of the development is perfectly natural, progressing as it does to meet the conditions I have described. In early Jewish thought there was the seed out of which a great tree might grow. In its final form this development leads to quite revolutionary conceptions, but

[1] Eccl. 5:2.

the progress towards the final idea is so gradual that the end is hardly discerned at the beginning. We shall follow the course of Hebrew thought in order to reach the point where evil is traced at last to a source other than God.

I have had occasion before to refer to Saul's mental disease. It is necessary to study that incident again. The ancient writer explains the change in the king thus: "Now the spirit of Jahveh departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jahveh fell upon him."[1] Whenever an acute attack of melancholia came upon the poor king, it was attributed to the presence of this evil spirit;[2] and this evil spirit led him to make an attempt upon the life of a devoted servant. Under the soothing influence of David's music we are told that Saul became well, "and the evil spirit departed from him."[3]

It is important to notice a distinction between spirits. When soon after Samuel's anointing the time came for Saul to assert himself in accordance with the prophet's suggestion, his heroic course to save his beleaguered kinsman is explained by saying that "the spirit of God rushed upon him."[4] But now we are told that this "spirit of Jahveh departed from him." Then Saul becomes another man indeed, and the mischief is wrought by "an *evil* spirit *from* Jahveh" which fell upon him. The spirit of Jahveh exercises a wholly beneficent influence upon man. That which works harm is not

[1] 1 Sam. 16:14.
[2] Cf. 1 Sam. 18:10; 19:9.
[3] 1 Sam. 16:23.
[4] Cf. 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6.

Jahveh, nor even Jahveh's spirit, but an evil spirit which nevertheless comes from Him. Good comes from Jahveh directly, evil somewhat indirectly. The spirit *of* Jahveh awakes vision and valour; an evil spirit *from* Jahveh produces madness and incites to crime.[1]

Unlike the cases of demoniacal possession in the Gospels, this evil spirit does not abide with Saul permanently. Indeed it may be dismissed for a season by the power of music. But it always returns again, and the evil deeds committed or intended by the king are due to its possession. It appears further that whenever Saul was in a state of despondent gloom, the evil spirit was supposed to be on hand.[2] The mental disease with which the king was afflicted was attributed to the presence in him of the evil spirit from Jahveh. Disease still comes from Jahveh, but by the operation of an intermediary. Here is plainly an entering wedge between God and evil, even though the edge is still thin.

The data available hardly allow us to assume that the Hebrews of this age believed in hosts of spirits of which some were good and some evil. It is impossible indeed to say whether the writer means us to understand that this spirit was essen-

[1] There is a much earlier story of the work of an evil spirit: When disaffection arose between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem, who had made him king, the discord is explained by the writer as the work of an evil spirit which God had sent for that purpose (Judg. 9:23).

[2] 1 Sam. 16:14.

tially an evil being; his intention may be that the spirit is called evil because his mission is evil.[1] A man may be called a bad man because he does a bad act. But a man may do a bad act and yet not be in reality a bad man. As we shall see the Hebrews saw no difficulty in giving a bad mission to a good being, provided there is a good end to be served. Even in the case of Saul there was a good end in view, for the Benjamite must be removed from the throne in order to make room for the Judean.

Some centuries later there was another king whose presence on earth was even less desirable than Saul's, and here, too, a spirit proves to be the chosen instrument to accomplish the required end. Ahab was a bad king, and his evil tendencies were accentuated and fostered by an unscrupulous wife. Israel must be rid of him. Through the vision of a prophet of immortal fame we are permitted to witness a sort of court scene in heaven. Jahveh was seated upon His throne, and the whole array of the heavenly host was standing on His right hand and on His left hand. Jahveh presents a problem for solution, as a king solicits advice from his cabinet: "Who will mislead Ahab so that he will go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?"[2] The problem apparently baffled the council, for though one says

[1] Briggs regards the "band of evil angels" (Ps. 78:49) as called evil because they bring disaster to men. The verse is, however, quite late ("Inter. Crit. Comm.").

[2] 1 Kings 22:20.

this and another says that, no satisfactory proposal is made. The hosts of heaven were apparently not expert in devising evil. We note that the question is not at this stage how shall Ahab be led to take the false step? but who shall lead him to take it? There was not one of the heavenly cabinet able to name the right person for this obnoxious job. But the resources of heaven are not exhausted yet.

Then we read—and we must note the words carefully: "And the Spirit came out and stood in the presence of Jahveh, and said, I will mislead him."[1] The rendering of our English versions "a spirit" misses the point altogether. The writer plainly had in mind a particular personage.[2] The idea is not that any chance spirit might volunteer for such an office, but that there is one specially resourceful in evil.[3] It is noteworthy that though the Spirit is aware of the problem propounded by Jahveh, and the hitherto futile attempts to find a suitable agent, he was not at the council at the beginning. We might indeed like to know why he

[1] 1 Kings 22:21.

[2] In his edition of the Hebrew text, Kittel goes so far as to suggest that perhaps we should read *the Satan* instead of *the spirit*. Such a change is unnecessary, but the doubt about the rendering does emphasize the point that a distinct individual is in the writer's mind.

[3] Mitchell takes another view. "The deceiver," he says, "is not an angel distinguished from the rest by a peculiar title or character" ("International Critical Commentary, Zechariah," p. 148). I have been obliged to abandon this position, which I formerly held, in view of the plain facts which I have brought out.

was not an original member of the conference, and whence he came when he did put in an appearance, but there is no information on these points. He presented himself dramatically at the opportune moment when he could proffer his peculiar powers; and apparently he was quite ready, perhaps even eager, to enter upon a mission of disaster. We may perhaps not be going too far if we infer that this spirit had no seat in the council of heaven save when some evil enterprise was to be undertaken.

Now the person for the deadly errand is found, and the next step is to devise the means. Jahveh Himself makes no suggestion. He had stated the end to be attained, and looks to others for the means. The Spirit is ready to serve as the agent, and he readily shows the way; he proposes to go forth and become a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. Thus Ahab will be allured to his death by the inspired and yet misleading prophetic assurance[1] that he will return home a conqueror.[2] Jahveh approves the plan and adds "and also thou shalt succeed," which may mean that so clever a plan cannot fail, or that the plan will succeed because it has Jahveh's sanction. The latter is the more probable interpretation, and it means that Jahveh will not give even a doomed king over to the Spirit to do with as he will, and that if the

[1] That prophets might give wrong guidance was often recognized, and Ezekiel declares that when a prophet is deceived, God Himself is responsible (Ezek. 14 : 9).

[2] 1 Kings 22 : 22. The whole story is found also in 2 Chron. 18.

Spirit has a disposition to evil, his own malign purpose cannot be put into effect without Jahveh's approval. Jahveh reserves under His own control forces that work for evil. Nevertheless the wedge is entering more deeply. The intermediary comes still more to the front.

This story is unquestionably pre-exilic in origin, and even in that age it is evident that we have Satan in everything but name. If we pass over a few centuries we may find a passage in which we have Satan in name as well as in act. Again a prophet sees a vision in which Jahveh and some of His messengers figure, though as Joshua the high priest appears, the scene is apparently laid at the temple in Jerusalem.

We are introduced to a trial in court in which the angel of Jahveh is the judge, and Joshua the high priest the defendant. There was another person present, and this person is more adequately introduced: "The Satan was standing at his [Joshua's] right hand to make an accusation against him."[1] The Satan completes the personnel of the court, as he fills the rôle of the prosecutor. The charge against the prisoner is not specifically stated, but there are certain conditions described which will serve as the basis for sound inferences. The accused priest was clothed in filthy garments, and, as Zechariah takes pains to explain, these are a figure for sinfulness. Then as we read that Jahveh has chosen Jerusalem, it is apparent that

[1] Zech. 3:1.

the priest stands in a representative capacity, and we conclude that the Satan charges the whole people with guilt.

The situation then may be reconstructed. Jerusalem had been completely laid waste some sixty-five years before, because the nation had been convicted of guilt. At the present time Joshua and Zerubbabel are initiating a movement to rebuild the temple, and perhaps restore the city. The point of the Satan's accusation is that the people are still guilty, and he holds that that condition is a bar to their projected restoration. A still sinful people cannot undo the harm wrought by Jahveh. Jahveh decreed the destruction of the temple because the people were wicked. As the wickedness persists Jahveh's decree cannot have been annulled. The Satan is hostile to any good for Jerusalem or for its people. And he makes the first move to make his enmity effective; he starts proceedings to put his ill will into action. It is not here, as in the Ahab story, Jahveh who has an evil design which He wishes some one to execute. The project for evil towards Israel originates elsewhere than with God. The wedge between God and evil is going in still further.

It is noteworthy that in this text the term is not Satan, but *the* Satan. That is, the word is not a proper name, but an official title, like the Prosecuting Attorney, or the Adjutant General. Indeed some scholars would translate the term into English and render "the Adversary," or better "the

Accuser." This rendering seems to me to weaken the expression unduly. For the prophet does not mean that any being might serve in this insidious rôle, but that there is one among the superhuman creatures to whom this title peculiarly belongs. In this respect it is exactly paralleled in the title *the Spirit* in the Ahab story. *The Spirit* of the early period and *the Satan* of the later perform the same function and are nearly identical. The chief point of difference is that the Spirit volunteers to put Jahveh's will into effect, while the Satan has an evil design of his own, a difference, it is true, that is by no means unimportant.

In this incident it is noteworthy that Jahveh is antagonistic to the Satan's course. The angel of Jahveh[1] does not even wait to hear what the Satan has to say, but checks him bluntly: "Jahveh rebuke thee, O Satan, yea, Jahveh rebuke thee." The Satan may act of himself, he may accuse Joshua, and try to secure the defeat of his plans for the restoration of Jerusalem, but he has no power of himself to make his malicious design effective. The angel of Jahveh gives a judgment entirely contrary to the Satan's desires, and orders the filthy garments worn by the priest replaced by apparel suitable to his holy office.

There is ground to believe that for some reason in Apostolic times it was not considered advisable to go further in opposition to Satan than to administer a rebuke. Something like that must be the

[1] So we should read in Zech. 3:2.

idea underlying the words of St. Jude, "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee." [1]

Strikingly similar to the passage in Zechariah is a couplet in Psalm 109:

> Appoint a wicked one over him,
> And let Satan stand at his right hand.[2]

It is true that most modern scholars have preferred to think of a man, and so render "an Adversary" instead of Satan. Briggs urges as an objection to the rendering *Satan* that the scene of the trial is laid upon earth, and not in heaven. To substantiate his position he cites only the passage in Zechariah. But even there we are evidently dealing with the trial of a man upon earth; Joshua with his filthy garments was surely not in heaven. Indeed Satan's activities are always upon earth, for he is invariably represented as attacking men, and so far as our knowledge goes, mortal man may be found only upon the earth. Therefore I am inclined to prefer the translation of the Prayer Book. The Psalm is late, the imprecatory part perhaps as late as the Maccabean period,[3] and at that time Satan was a proper name; indeed there is no other place in the post-exilic writings in which Satan is used as a common noun. However that may be,

[1] Jude 9.
[2] Ps. 109 : 6.
[3] So Briggs, "Inter. Crit. Comm."

the poet like the prophet brings us to a court scene. It is the prayer of the persecuted that the wicked ruler may be brought to trial under such conditions that there will be no chance of acquittal. He asks that Satan, the supreme enemy of man, may stand to accuse the defendant, and he could wish nothing worse.

I cite the passage here because of the similarity of the situation to the passage in Zechariah. But the conception of Satan in the Psalm is much more developed than in the prophecy.

In the prologue to the book of Job there is still further information about the activities of the Satan; I say the Satan, for here too the term is still used as an official title and not as a proper name. There are two brief passages in which this personage figures.[1]

It has long been my conviction that these Satan stories are not only not an original part of the book of Job, but are not even an original part of the prologue. Certainly they must be later than the epilogue, or the Elihu speeches, or the speeches of Jahveh. In all other parts of this highly composite book evil is treated either as an insoluble mystery, or as a punishment for sin. In the Satan stories, as we shall presently see, there is no mystery about evil in the world, and evil is distinctly not a punishment for sin. In all the rest of the book the presence of evil in the world is discussed as a problem, and nowhere is a satisfactory solution

[1] Job 1: 6–12; 2: 1–10.

reached. In the Satan stories there is no problem at all, for the source of evil is assumed to be definitely known.

In the epilogue there is a reference to the speeches of Jahveh, to the colloquies between Job and his antagonists, and to the prologue other than the Satan stories. The three antagonists are rebuked because their speeches were of a wrong tenor, and Job is commended. In other words in the epilogue justice is meted out to all the parties involved. Now if Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar merited reproof, much more should the Satan come in for a sound denunciation; but as a matter of fact he is never mentioned at all. Though he is guilty above all, he does not appear even for the mildest rebuke. The only reasonable explanation is, in my humble opinion, that the one who wrote the epilogue did not know the Satan stories.

On the other hand it is easy to account for their insertion. The book of Job is plainly composite. It is a book so to speak issued in various editions, each edition containing fresh contributions designed to throw still further light upon the mystery of pain. The Elihu speeches were added by a poet theologian who felt that Eliphaz and his fellows had not said the last word in favour of the orthodox position. The speeches of Jahveh were possibly added to present a new view. The epilogue was added to show that the righteous man wins out in the end with complete vindication and ample rewards.

When the idea of the Satan's place in the causation of evil had been developed, it was clear that the book of Job, which was looked upon as a sort of anthology on the subject of evil, was defective, and a writer proceeds to incorporate the new doctrine. As we know from numerous instances the Hebrew method of correcting a doctrinal treatise was not so much by revision as by addition. A reviser was not likely to strike out what he found that was unsatisfactory, or even to change it, but to put his contribution in the form of new material. The result is often to give us a very incongruous work. In this case the addition of the Satan stories makes null and void even the speeches of Jahveh, but such results apparently did not trouble the Hebrew mind. As long as the last speaker could say his right word, it did not matter how much of error others had uttered.

In these stories the writer draws a distinction between the Satan and "the sons of God," though the former appears to have as free access to God as the latter.[1] The underlying idea is that there are certain occasions on which there is an assembly of "the sons of God" with Jahveh; and on such an occasion the Satan finds the door open to him as well as to the sons of God though he is not of them. The same distinction has already been found in the Ahab story between the heavenly host, corresponding to the sons of God, and the Spirit corresponding to the Satan. The Satan is like the sons of

[1] Davidson holds a different view, "The Book of Job," p. 6.

God in that he is not a mortal being, nor limited to any one abode; but nevertheless the specific words for the two classes show that he is not to be identified with them.

His sphere of operations is the inhabited world: for when Jahveh asks him whence he came, his reply is, "from roving around on the earth, and from walking about upon it."[1] Now it may seem that too big an inference has been drawn from this statement, for the Satan does not assert that travelling upon the earth is his permanent occupation, and Jahveh would hardly need to ask where he had been if the earth were his habitual haunt. Nevertheless it appears that the Satan was always engaged in trying to run down men, and his quarry must lead him at times to visit the earth.

Jahveh's next question is big in its implications. He asks the Satan if he has noted his servant Job, the perfectly upright man. The question suggests that Jahveh assumes that the Satan walked about among the sons of men to note those against whom he might bring an accusation. Jahveh throws down a challenge that there is at least one man, whose match cannot be found, and against whom even the accuser of men par excellence can make no charge.

But Jahveh is mistaken, for the Satan does make a charge against Job, and incidentally deals a hard blow to what for the lack of a better name I have called the orthodox doctrine of good and evil. He

[1] Job 1:7.

declares that Job is not upright for the sake of righteousness, but merely because it pays. God has made Job very rich, and therefore Job is very good. Since integrity is made the price of wealth, Job is very willing to pay.

This point needs emphasizing. Righteousness that is pursued as a means to abundant material possessions is not a righteousness that is impregnable. On his flight to escape the just resentment of his brother, Jacob came to the ancient sanctuary at Bethel, and there made a solemn vow to this effect: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey on which I am setting out, and will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and I safely return to my father's house, and Jahveh shall be a God to me, then this stone which I have set up as a memorial shall be a house of God, and of all that he bestows upon me, I will unfailingly give a tenth to him."[1] Was Job a second Jacob? Jacob was willing to serve God, provided that God first served him. The righteousness practised for material ends certainly has a suggestion of a taint. A high standard of conduct can hardly be maintained in this way.

A better grade of virtue is beautifully brought out in a hymn by St. Francis Xavier.

> My god, I love thee; not because
> I hope for heaven thereby;
> Nor yet because if I love not
> I must forever die.

[1] Gen. 28: 20–22.

Then why, O blesséd Jesus Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell.

The Satan suggests such a high ethical standard, and expresses his conviction that Job had not attained thereto. The Satan is a stout disbeliever in human goodness. Such as there seems to be he looks upon as superficial and insincere, and he intimates that all men have their price. And we notice that his chosen objects of attack are not publicans and sinners, but the choicest spirits of their age, Joshua and Job and David, and a greater than all of these, the very Son of God.

It has puzzled men to know why Jahveh was willing to hand Job over to Satan to be proved. We need not insist upon logical courses in ancient stories which have something of the character of folk-lore, and yet a reason is suggested in the high moral standard I have indicated. Job had never met the conditions suggested by the accuser. He had always been good, but he had also always been rich. Jahveh believed that he would continue to be good even if he became poor. But there was no way of proving his faith save by the hard method of stripping Job of his earthly possessions. It seems to God worth while to find out at any cost of pain whether man will do good for its own sake, or only for the sake of a reward.

In this case also the Satan can exercise no power

for evil of himself. He can accuse men, he can search out their weaknesses, he can impugn their motives when there is nothing else to attack, but he is not permitted to strike a blow unless Jahveh gives him leave. Jahveh is master of the affairs of the world; there is as yet no division of authority. Jahveh does not altogether trust the sinister accuser, and therefore will not turn Job over to him without setting a rigid limit to his activities: "All that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand."[1] Then "the Satan went forth from the presence of Jahveh."

At once the blows fall fast and furiously upon the devoted head of the victim of Satanic animosity. Raiding bands of Bedawin make incursions upon his property, and his vast herds of oxen and asses and camels are carried away; a thunder-storm destroys his flocks of sheep; and a hurricane blows down the house in which his children are feasting. In each calamity the attendant servants were destroyed, but a single one surviving the disaster to tell the tale of woe. When the last tragic tidings reached him, Job did not exaggerate his condition when he said: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."[2]

Now our text does not expressly say that the Satan prompted the Sabeans and Chaldeans to fall upon Job's herds, nor that he let loose the thunderbolt and the hurricane; but from the present arrangement of the material, that is the plain implica-

[1] Job 1:12. [2] *Ibid.*, 1:21.

tion.[1] These evils are what we should call natural calamities, and they are such as the Hebrews had always heretofore attributed directly to God Himself. Even now Jahveh's permission is deemed necessary to Satan's deeds; but Jahveh once consenting to give him power over Job's possessions, then the Satan himself can direct the forces of nature and control the movements of all races of men. Jahveh's sanction covers only the end, the destruction of Job's property. The Satan is left entire freedom in choosing the means. It appears that the Satan himself can direct and control nature and man, and that he exercises his power wholly for evil ends.

There is a second act of the drama; there is another court day in heaven when the sons of God come to render homage to their Sovereign, and when the Satan comes for the same purpose.[2] The same conversation takes place between Jahveh and the Satan as in the former scene, save that Jahveh adds to his praise of Job these striking words: "And he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou didst incite me against him to ruin him without cause."

There is a gratifying note of triumph in Jahveh's

[1] Even if the Satan stories are additions to the original prologue, as I suppose, then the story of the calamities (Job 1: 13–22), intended by the first writer to be understood as natural phenomena, is put between the two appearances of the Satan, so as to imply that he caused the disasters.

[2] In the Satan's first appearance (Job 1:6) the object of his presenting himself is not stated.

comment. The man in whose virtue God had supreme faith had successfully stood the test of sudden and dire poverty. But I think it is no exaggeration to assert that there is also a note of regret, and a bare hint of helplessness in view of the accuser's insinuations, or more accurately instigations. It is as if Jahveh deplored putting His trusted servant through the severe ordeal, but was constrained to meet the demands of the assailant. If this be so we may detect a further sign of Jahveh's seeming helplessness in the exact terms of the consent granted to the Satan; in effect Jahveh said: "You demand his wealth and it is impossible to withhold that;" but as if in compensation he adds, "woe unto you if you touch his person." It is a bit like the finding of the Venetian court in favour of Shylock: Take your pound of flesh according to the bond, but heaven help you if in getting the flesh you shed a single drop of Christian blood.

The cynic is never sensitive, and the proficient accuser of upright men must ever be a cynic. Though Job had come through the fire without a singe, the Satan is no more ready to admit his integrity than he had been in the first place. He claims that the limitations imposed upon his freedom were too severe, and that that reservation prevented the success of his experiment. An unusual man might indeed bear the loss of his goods, but there is one thing no man will endure, and that is physical pain: "Touch his bone

and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face."[1]

Imagine for a moment that Job could overhear the discussion about himself; would he not at this point cry out, Hold, enough? If we study these wonderful stories with reasonable rapport we surely feel like interposing a plea against any further torture, even as Amos did for the Jacob that was small.[2] The poor patriarch has suffered enough to satisfy God or man, and no being could suffer enough to satisfy one who exults in human pain. But no, the tragedy must go on to the bitter consummation; it must be shown that there is such a thing as human righteousness that is altogether independent of any material condition whatsoever, even though such rectitude can only be demonstrated by poverty and tears and pain and blood. So Job, the type of God's elect, is given over again to the hand of his accuser. Though the Satan is now granted larger freedom than he had before; for he may now strike at the bone and the flesh; even so a bound to his malice is straitly fixed: "Only spare his life."[3] The Satan may wound, but he cannot kill. His evil powers are still limited by God's decree.

We are not left to inference about the Satan's course now. The infliction of sickness is at all events an original part of the Satan supplement. So we read that the Satan went forth and smote Job with an awful disease so that he was covered

[1] Job 2:5. [2] Amos 7:3, 5. [3] Job 2:6.

from head to foot with sore boils, and the itching was so terrible that he used a potsherd to scratch himself with.

Human disease then, like the loss of worldly possessions, is the result of the operation of the Satanic malice; and neither adversity is an evidence of human sin. Not only so, but the afflictions are witness of an integrity so firmly grounded that it cannot be shaken by the infliction of evils always reckoned great among the sons of men, the tragic death of children,[1] the sudden loss of great riches, and the attack of a painful disease. What heretofore had been supposed to come from God Himself is deemed now to spring from man's great enemy, even though the foe cannot operate without at least the reluctant consent of Jahveh. God has kept within Himself the ultimate source of all evil and of all good. Our Lord, whose aims for man were the precise opposite of Satan's, used words which Satan might equally have said: "I can of myself do nothing."[2]

With this conclusion as to the source of disease we shall not fail to recall words of similar import from the lips of the Lord Jesus. Of the paralyzed woman whom He chanced to run across in the synagogue one Sabbath day, He said she was one

[1] It is not expressly stated that Job's children were slain in the collapse of the eldest brother's house (Job 1:19), for "young men" is the term elsewhere applied to Job's servants; but it is apparently implied that all in the house are killed. In the colloquies Job's children are living according to the correct translation of Job 19:17.

[2] John 5:30.

whom Satan had bound for eighteen years.[1] Our Lord teaches plainly that disease comes from Satan and not from God; for it is a gratuitous assumption to assert in this case that Satan had inflicted this infirmity in accordance with a divine law because the woman was sinful. In the same way St. Paul explains the thorn in his flesh to be a messenger from Satan,[2] and though he does see a good end that might be served by that evil, he does not associate the messenger with past sin, nor does he assert that God sent it to punish him. St. Peter evidently put the natural broad construction upon the teachings of his Master, for in his discourse to Cornelius and his heathen fellows, telling them about the Messiah, he describes his mission thus: "Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."[3]

In marked contrast are some phrases in our practically unusable Office for the Visitation of the Sick.[4] No matter what the record of his life may be, the sufferer is positively admonished: "Whatsoever your sickness be, know ye certainly that it is God's visitation." If the sufferer is very sick, no more need be said; but if his ailment is slight, the visiting Eliphaz is to continue thus: "Take therefore in good part the chastisement of the Lord," and, "if ye be without chastisement then are ye bastards, and not sons." If this doctrine be in accord with the teachings of our Lord, perhaps those of us who

[1] Luke 13 : 16. [2] 1 Cor. 1 : 27. [3] Acts 10 : 38.
[4] Prayer Book, pp. 281 ff.

have the marks of surgeons' knives on our body may be the one surest of our sonship; the scars may be the *stigmata* to be prized like the marks of the spear and of the nails.

The end of the Satan stories leaves us as curious as were some of the readers of Hawthorne's "Marble Faun." They were not more desirous to know about Donatello's ears than we to know whether the Satan was satisfied of Job's integrity, or whether he only left off, because there was nothing else he could do save to take Job's life, and to do that would defeat his own end. For even Satan would accuse the upright in vain after he was dead. He could strip Job of all earthly possessions, he could lay upon him a painful and loathsome disease, but he could not constrain him to renounce God, an act regarded in the story as the supreme length of sin.

But the Hebrews developed the doctrine of Satan further than anything that we have found yet, and in the last stage, we find him as the instigator of sin, and so going further as the enemy of man, and doing him the greatest conceivable harm. To steal the purse is relatively to steal trash; and even to take away one's good name is not to do irreparable harm; but to damage the soul of a man is the last act of the most implacable foe. According to the records that is precisely what Satan did to the greatest of Hebrew kings.

There has already been occasion to refer to David's enumeration of the fighting forces of all Israel. The Chronicler takes this story from the

book of Samuel[1] without important change so far as we are here concerned, save in one particular. In the earlier passage the story is thus introduced: "And again the anger of Jahveh was kindled against Israel, and he instigated David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah." In the Chronicler's version this passage is changed so that it reads: "And Satan stood up against Israel and instigated David to number Israel." According to the Chronicler's text, God is not angry with His people, and consequently has no desire to bring evil upon them. But Satan has an inveterate hostility towards the human race, and to destroy it is in his heart; and the more upright the nation, the stronger is his desire to bring it to ruin.

In the Chronicler's account the definite article has disappeared, and Satan is no longer a title, but, as in Psalm 109, a proper name. The Spirit which suggested a way to destroy Ahab the king, the Accuser of Joshua the priest and of Job the upright, has become as definite a personage as Adam or Paul.

Further, we notice that Satan is now after higher game than any individual. In the one place the Spirit aimed at the undoing of a single bad king; in another the Accuser sought to block the way of a single high priest;[2] in a third he would wreck a single upright man; but now he sets his heart upon the extermination of a whole people, and so far did

[1] 1 Chron. 21 : 1–27—2 Sam. 24.

[2] Though Joshua may be deemed representative of the people.

he succeed that seventy thousand persons died a horrible death before his malicious hand was stayed.

There is no intimation that Satan felt any particular animosity towards David. The Chronicler sets up David as his own great hero, and perhaps could hardly have allowed even Satan to manifest hostility towards the founder of the temple ordinances. But Satan uses David to carry out his nefarious designs; the great king becomes a mere tool in his hands, just as the prophets of Ahab were conceived as helpless machines in the hands of the lying spirit which possessed them.

It is not easy for us to see exactly in what respect the taking of a military census was a grave sin. In this day as never before we can see the terrible danger of an outright militarism. We realize indeed a sound propriety in the action of a State which puts itself in the position of the strong man armed so that his goods are in peace. But the strong man armed so that his neighbour's goods may not be in peace is another matter. There is possibly a hint of an ambitious militarism in the story of David's enrollment, as it was designed to show the war power of Israel; but the Hebrews were not alarmed at such a course, and we strive in vain to find an adequate justification for so heavy a blow to a small state, especially in view of the innocence of the people. It is plain, however, that the offense was considered grievous, and that is all that is essential to the story. For the point is that

Satan instigates David to commit an act which was regarded as seriously sinful.[1]

There is another radical advance over any presentation of Satan's activity previously encountered. In this case Satan moves of his own initiative. There is no council in heaven, there is no possibility of the obstructive rebuke of the angel of Jahveh, there is no divine sanction, and there is no limitation set to Satan's power. He does not consult Jahveh, or have anything whatever to do with Him, but acts quite independently. Satan is breaking out of bounds. Indeed, in comparison with the case related in Job, conditions are quite reversed. In the latter story the Satan inflicts disease, acting under divine consent and control; in the former, even according to the Chronicler's version, Jahveh inflicts the plague, and He is obliged to take that course because of Satan's compulsion of David. There is still so much concession to the old ideas, that a law is assumed to be in operation that sin must be punished by the infliction of evil. Satan provides the sin, and then God is bound to send evil to satisfy the law. Satan acts so as to force God to act. Satan inspires sin, so that God will be constrained to bring evil. Over the fortunes of men Satan has the upper hand.

[1] Joab, and according to the version in 2 Samuel 2 : 4, his staff, regarded the transaction as a mistake. Of course, in all such stories there is a ready explanation in the fact that we have an interpretation of events with a certain theological conception as its basis. There was a census and there was a plague, and the writer relates them as cause and effect.

It must be confessed that some rather large conclusions are drawn from scanty data. We might wonder whether the Chronicler would not have modified the story in other particulars if he had written it himself. But inasmuch as he does change other statements wherever it suits him, we may feel fairly sure that he changed the theology so far as he deemed necessary. The data he has given us are few; but they are definite and the conclusions deducible therefrom are unmistakable.

The fact that the Chronicler made such a radical change as he did shows how theological conceptions had departed from the ancient standards. It was impossible for the Chronicler to accept the idea that God Himself had instigated the king after His own heart to do wrong. Then again the Chronicler belonged to a time when the nation had attained a certain righteousness by the law. Yet the national life was at a low ebb, and some other explanation of the unhappy state of Israel must be found. The development of the idea of Satan offered a ready solution of the problem. Here as elsewhere the Chronicler explains ancient conditions in accordance with the practices and beliefs of his own time.

This general view of Satan's activities has prevailed from the Chronicler's time to our own. When our Lord was in the deserts, wrestling with the tremendous problems of His mission, the story of His struggle is described concretely after the time-honoured Hebrew method. There is a scene

in which occurs a brief dialogue between our Lord and Satan,[1] and Satan appears not primarily to lead Jesus astray, though he does try that, but with a larger aim of blocking the way of the Son of God, and so arresting the redemption of man. Here Satan aims at the whole human race. Like death he loves a shining mark, and even the Messiah is not immune from his assaults. When, however, there is nothing bigger abroad, Satan will expend his nefarious energies on lesser luminaries. He secured one victim from the little band of disciples, and made a nearly successful try at another, desiring the impulsive Peter that he might sift him as wheat.[2]

The idea of a being other than God or man which tempted man to sin is very old in Hebrew literature, as we know from the strange story of the serpent in the garden of Eden. The serpent shows all the functions and all the cunning of Satan. He acts independently and even challenges the statements of God. But this conception was repugnant to the Hebrew mind, and never found a place in Hebrew thought until the old doctrine reappears with a celestial being as the tempter in place of an animal.

The Chronicler brings us at least close to dualism; he shows that the Hebrews solved one of their vexing problems by shifting the burden from a good God to what we may almost call a bad

[1] Matt. 4:1–10; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1–13.
[2] Luke 22:3.

god. The small seed of an evil spirit sent from God to accomplish His own wise purpose has grown into the spreading tree of a malicious being whose sole aim is the infliction of evil upon man, and who can work his nefarious will without let or hindrance from on high. In seeking to escape one horn of a dilemma we have been landed on another sharper than the one we have quit. In clearing up one hard problem another has been created that is more difficult than the original.

And yet we can see some real progress. The wedge between God and evil has been driven in so deeply that evil no longer presupposes sin on the part of the afflicted. God indeed brought evil upon Israel, but the evil does not show that God was angry with His people, or that they had been sinful. Adversity can no longer be interpreted as a sign of God's wrath. A Bishop may come to his death by an automobile and still be worthy of canonization. The scars on our bodies, for aught that any man can say, may veritably be the marks of the Lord Jesus. No man dare say "when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, and he himself tempteth no man."[1]

But we have been asked to pay a great price for this treasure, a price greater than man can pay. For dualism is dangerous ground, and we have approached that position close enough to be on our guard. But dualism was not the last word of

[1] Jas. 1:13.

Hebrew thought upon the problem of evil. Man was not to be left forever the prey of an independent and unhindered evil monster. Satan was not to get out of control. God's absolute supremacy in the world was to be maintained at any cost. Another step must be taken by the Hebrew thinkers, and our next move will be to follow them in their advance.

# VI

## Deferred Rewards and Punishments

# VI

## DEFERRED REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

*But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst good things, and Lazarus in the like manner evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art in anguish.*
—Luke 16:25.

THERE has been a marked tendency in the criticism of recent years to hold that when the later Hebrew writers describe the sufferings of individuals they habitually employ the individual as a figure for the nation. To comprehend this literature we must ever be on the watch to bring in the national interpretation. The suffering servant in the deutero-Isaiah is often held to represent afflicted Israel. The many psalms which describe apparently the pain of a single person are thought in reality to depict the agony of the whole people.

It is not surprising that every expression of pain should be given such a broad interpretation, for the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era were years of peculiar woe for Israel. The sacred writers were concerned more for the State and the Church than for the individual; they had a marked social outlook; and it would be strange if they

contented themselves with an account of merely personal woes. Israel, as we have seen, had a hard time at many stages of their history, but it was darkest just before the dawn. If their fortunes were to be explained according to the established formula, at this period Israel must be guilty indeed. For enormous sins would be required to account for the extent of the nation's distress. The suffering took many forms.

In the first place the free people of God were held in a bondage more galling than the ancient slavery of Egypt, for in those early days Israel had not become a State and so had never really known the joy of national freedom. It would be difficult to find a more plaintive note of subtle pain than that which some of the enslaved exiles felt. Take this expression from an assuredly noble soul:

> By the rivers of Babylon,
> There we dwelt, yea, we wept,
> When we remembered Zion.
> Upon the willows in the midst thereof
> We hanged up our harps.
> For there our captors asked words of a song,
> And they that wasted us required mirth,
> saying,[1]

[1] This line is barely translatable, and scholars are unable to determine the meaning as it stands, or to agree upon a suitable emendation. I would propose something like this:

> For our captors made a demand upon us,
> Words of a song to give them mirth:
> Sing us of the songs of Zion.

"Sing us of the songs of Zion."
How shall we sing Jahveh's song
Upon an alien soil?[1]

At the end of the long Levites' prayer preserved for us in the book of Nehemiah there is a striking picture of the oppressions of the Greek age, showing that the people were slaves in their own land: "Behold, we are slaves this day, and the land that thou gavest to our fathers to eat its fruit and its good, behold we are slaves upon it. And its abundant produce is for the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they exercise power as they will over our bodies, and over our cattle, and we are in great distress."[2]

The loss of their sanctuary was another severe trial. Israel remembered with long cherished bitterness the glee of the Edomites, who stood by while the Huns from Babylon demolished the holy temple, and who, as blow succeeded blow, shouted in triumph, "down with it, down with it, even to the ground."[3] In the time of the Greek persecution, the Jews stood helplessly by while even more galling depredations were undertaken by their foes. A poet has given a graphic picture of the devastations that were wrought:

[1] Ps. 137:1–4. Another taunt often hurled at Israel was: "Where is now thy God?" as Psalm 42:3 and often. The enemy saw that Jahveh of whom the Hebrews were wont to boast (Cf. Ezek. 8:21 ff.) was not doing anything in the way of succouring His people.

[2] Neh. 9:3f.

[3] Ps. 137:7.

Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly;
They have set up their ensigns for signs.
They seemed as men that lifted up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
And now all the carved work thereof
They brake down with hatchets and hammers.
They have set thine sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned to the earth the dwelling place of thy name.
They said in their heart, let us make havoc of them altogether,
They have burned down all the synagogues in the land.[1]

And the distress was all the greater because the people felt that they were cut off from all communication with God. They were like Saul when God would not answer his entreaties by prophet, dream or Urim.

We see not our signs:
There is no more any prophet.
Nor one with us that knows how long.[2]

These writers do not exaggerate the deplorable conditions of their nation. But God is not insensible of the woes of His people, and the Holy Spirit selects other voices to carry messages of consolation. In this search for comfort Hebrew thought moves along two lines. One of them is the develop-

[1] Ps. 74:4–8. In parts the text is corrupt and the rendering uncertain, but the general tenor of the passage is clear.
[2] *Ibid.*, 74:9.

ment of the idea of the Messianic Kingdom. This subject is too big for more than a brief notice of one of its phrases here; and such a notice will suffice, for it is only necessary to point out its relation to our subject; and it is related in this respect that the Messianic Kingdom would result in the justification of the righteous sufferers and the overthrow of the wicked oppressors.

In Israel's darkest days God had always raised up saviours to deliver them from their distress. Moses had rescued them from the Egyptians, Deborah and Barak from the Canaanites, and David from the Philistines. And God had always raised up seers who insisted that there was yet to be a bright day for Israel.[1] So in the dark days of the Greek oppression there were voices eagerly protesting that a day would come when God, who could save by many or by few, would restore the ancient kingdom, and the Israelites would wreak a terrible vengeance on their oppressing foes.

The prophet Joel describes such a time.[2] First, there is a proclamation of a world war: "Proclaim ye this among the nations: consecrate war; arouse the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up." Joel was no pacifist. He was looking for a general uprising of the oppressed Israelites in all parts of the world: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks

[1] Such prophecies we find in Jeremiah 30–33, Ezekiel 33–48, Isaiah 40–66, Haggai and Zechariah.

[2] Joel 3 : 9 ff.

into spears: let the weak say, I am a mighty man." The tyrannical nations of the world are invited to come to test their prowess: "Let the nations bestir themselves and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about." The slaughter of the foes will be so sweeping and so easy that it will be like the cutting of the harvest, or the treading of the grapes: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest grows ripe: come tread ye, for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision."

There is a gory description of Jahveh's overthrow of the hated enemy in the deutero-Isaiah.[1] The spirit of the passage is very different from that of the rest of this great prophecy, but it represents a fond desire of the persecuted: "Who is it now that comes all red with crimsoned garments like a vintager? that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the fullness of his power?" The suggestive answer is: "I that proclaim victory, mighty to deliver." Then a further significant question is asked: "Wherefore is thine apparel so red, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" The answer is comprehensive: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no one with me: yea, I trod them in my anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and all my raiment

[1] Isa. 63: 1–6. *Edom* and *Bozrah* of the text seem to be errors; see Marti, *Jesaja*.

have I defiled. For a day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked and there was none to help; and I was appalled, and there was none to uphold: therefore mine arm wrought me deliverance; and my wrath upheld me. And I trod down the peoples in mine anger and I crushed them in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood upon the earth."

The Messiah who could meet the needs of a people ground under the heel of a merciless foe was one that could slay without limit or pity. Under the given conditions it was impossible for some of God's seers to perceive that relief could come in any other way. Still succour did not come. The enemy did not change his hard rule, and no angel with a slaying sword was sent. But in Israel hope never dies. The discomfiture of the adversaries must be accomplished in some other way. And there are other ways. One way much esteemed in the latter part of the Jewish era was the conquest of the tyrant by the superior wit or greater piety of the Jews. The mind or the soul are the forces by which evil is vanquished. The age produced many stories of victory after this manner. The book of Daniel contains a number of such tales; and the book of Esther has much more to do with this sort of vindication of Israel than with the feast of Purim. Several of the apocryphal stories, like that of Judith, of Bel and the Dragon, are built along the same lines. The inventive genius of the Hebrews seized upon historic characters, or invented fictitious per-

sons, to show that the man of Israel was superior to his heathen neighbours by reason of his religion; and thus equipped he might win a great victory for himself or for the whole people. For the Israelite was never an individualist; his supreme concern was not personal gain, but the general welfare of the nation.

But there was another line of progress in Hebrew thought. The prophet can draw bloody pictures of an avenging God, and the raconteur can relate incidents true or fictitious of the hanging of Hamans; but these things neither bring Israel peace, nor offer a lasting support for hope and faith. The godly people still suffer, and there is no sign, even on the distant horizon, of an end to their woes. Courage can only be kept alive in Israel by some stable ground that will not shift like the sands of the sea; a further advance in thought must be made, and a hope offered that will stand the severe test of time. God never fails, and out of the stress of the time was born to the people of Israel the greatest comfort that can support a tried soul.

The most significant and far-reaching development of theology in this age was the presentation of the idea of a future life. This subject invites careful attention on our part because it is intimately connected with the problem of good and evil. The Hebrews did not accept the doctrine of immortality because it seemed speculatively probable, or in response to the yearning of the human soul; they

accepted it finally because it offered a solution of the grave problem with which the martyred people was confronted. The Greeks brought the martyrdom; they were responsible for the conditions which made the problem press so hard; and they gave the key to Israel to unravel the mystery.

In spite of its evident relief to a distressing condition this new doctrine of immortality won its way with much difficulty, and one of the great religious parties in Israel never accepted it at all. Indeed, before the new teaching could gain a place, it was necessary to repudiate the universal teaching of their greatest leaders. Search the canonical Hebrew Scriptures as we will, and on the basis of a sound text and scientific exegesis, we can find no clear-cut word which supports the idea of a future life.[1] But on the other hand there are numerous passages which show beyond doubt that many Hebrews flatly rejected the doctrine.

According to the Jewish belief those who died went to Sheol, and there took up their final abode. The condition of the dead is a state of permanent unconsciousness. Those who died were really and wholly dead. A psalmist prays fervently for life, and intimates, to put the matter bluntly, that if he

[1] Such expressions as we find in Psalms 16 : 11 ; 71 : 20 ; 73 : 24 ; Job 19 : 25 ff. are of doubtful interpretation at best. The passage in Job is badly corrupted, and the rendering of the Authorized Version, which is based on the Vulgate, is quite inadmissible. If the passages, one or all combined, may be held to offer a hint, they do not present a foothold for the faith ; for they are at the best vague and indefinite.

were given over to death, a devout worshipper would be lost to God:

For in death there is none that remembers thee;
In Sheol who can give thee thanks?[1]

Death and Sheol are synonymous, and in Sheol all connection with God is ended. Another poet speaks in a similar strain:

What profit is there in my blood, if I descend to the pit?
Can the dust praise thee? Can it declare thy truth?[2]

But such passages do not tell the whole story. Specific denial of a resurrection is put into the mouth of the hopeless Job:

As a cloud is consumed and vanisheth away,[3]
So he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more.
He shall never again return to his house,
Neither shall his place know him any more.[4]

As long as a man lives, God could find him though he be hidden in the remotest regions of the earth or sea, as Amos insists;[5] but once man reaches Sheol he is beyond divine reach:

For now shall I lie down in the dust;
And thou wilt seek me diligently, but I shall not be.[6]

[1] Ps. 6:5. [2] *Ibid.*, 30:9. Cf. Ps. 88:10–12; 115:17.
[3] Or better, as the smoke arises and disappears.
[4] Job 7:9 f. [5] Amos 9:3 f. [6] Job 7:21.

Job compares man's future to that of a tree that is cut down. The advantage lies with the tree, for he says:

> There is hope of a tree,
> If it be cut down, it will sprout again,
> And its shoot will not fail.[1]

There is no such renewal for a human being:

> But man dieth, and is laid low:
> And a mortal perishes, and is no more.
> As the waters fail from a pond,
> And as the brook dries up and disappears;
> So man lieth down, and riseth not:
> Till the heavens be no more, he shall not awake,
> Nor be roused from his sleep.[2]

This idea seems to have been held from the earliest days, for in the story of man's fall the final sentence is: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."[3]

In a late apocalytic prophecy there does seem to be conceived a possibility of action on the part of the shades in Sheol. When the king of Babylon comes to his doom, Sheol will stir up the dead who once were mighty upon the earth, and they will greet the newcomer with a taunt: "Thou also hast become weak as we are; thou hast become like one of us? Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol,

[1] Job 14:7. [2] *Ibid.*, 14:10–12. [3] Gen. 3:19.

. . . the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee."[1] At best such a place offers but a joyless existence. There is no discharge from this eternal prison, and the mention of worms suggests destruction. Even the reviving of the shades may be considered as an imaginative means of gloating over the downfall of Israel's oppressor.

It is possible, however, in the search of the Scriptures, to find a slight foundation upon which building might proceed in due time; for the Hebrews had a crude conception of life in man apart from the earthly material of which the body was made. In the most primitive account of creation dust of the earth was formed into the shape of a human being; but it remained an inert mass until Jahveh Himself breathed the breath of life into the nostrils. Again there was the persistent belief that the blood was the life, and so it was forbidden to consume the blood even of animals slain for meat. The blood must always be poured back into the earth. This blood seemed to retain qualities which inhere in living beings, for we can hardly regard the expression as wholly figurative when God told Cain that Abel's blood cried to him from the ground.[2]

A similar idea is discernible in a plaintive cry bursting forth from the lips of the despondent Job:

> O earth, cover not thou my blood,
> And let there be no resting place to my cry.[3]

The man would be gone, and yet his blood might

[1] Isa. 14:10 f. [2] Gen. 4:10. [3] Job 16:18 f.

be able to cry out for justice as that of the murdered Abel's appealed for vengeance. It was held, as Ezekiel shows, that the blood left upon the bare rock demands retribution, but blood once absorbed into the earth is lost forever.[1] On the whole we may conclude that there was a belief in a shadowy sort of life in the blood. It is not much, but the tiniest seed, if properly nurtured, may become a great tree.

The Hebrews shared the general idea that a long life was one of man's greatest blessings.[2] It is often said that Israel, unlike other nations, looked for its golden age in the future. The contention served a purpose, but it is only partially true. Throughout their history the people were ever looking back to a glorious past, especially as that was the time in which God had so signally worked for them.[3] But there was another glory of the past, the unwonted long lives of the antediluvian patriarchs. To have lived like Enoch's son for nearly a millennium was conceived as making birth into this world worth a man's while.

The patriarch Jacob who can claim but a meagre hundred and twenty years, and feels that his life is already nearly spent thus laments to Pharaoh about the fewness of his days: "Short and evil has been the span of the years of my life; and they have not attained unto the span of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."[4]

[1] Ezek. 24:7 f.
[2] Cf. Prov. 3:1 f., 16.
[3] *E. g.*, Ps. 44.
[4] Gen. 47:9.

The shortness as well as the sadness of earthly life is pictured and deplored in one of the noblest Psalms:

> The span of our years is threescore years and ten,
> Or even by reason of strength fourscore years;
> Yet is their pride but labour and sorrow;
> For it is soon gone and we fly away.[1]

Correspondingly death was regarded as the supreme evil. In a very few cases it is true we meet those whose fortunes were so evil, or whose plight was so desperate that they yearned for an end to their torment even in the grave. Jeremiah[2] and Job[3] longed for it, as the lesser of two evils; and Saul sought it lest he be tortured and humiliated by his captors.[4] But such instances are marked exceptions. We find many indications of a contrary idea, such as Hezekiah's lament of disappointment that he should be cut off before his time.[5] The greatest evil that heaven could devise for the wicked Ahab was that he should be slain, and so his life brought to a premature end.[6] In one of the bitterest imprecations among the evil fortunes prayed for is this:

> May his days be few;
> May another take his office.
> May his children be fatherless,
> And his wife a widow.[7]

[1] Ps. 90:10. [2] Jer. 20:14 ff. [3] Job 3.
[4] 1 Sam. 31:4. [5] 2 Kings 20:2 ff.; Isa. 38:2 ff.
[6] 1 Kings 22:20 [7] Ps. 109:8 f.

But when the conception of a future life began to win favour, it fitted in admirably with one phase of the doctrine of good and evil, a phase of which I have spoken before. Rewards and punishments did not always come when they were apparently due. The righteous did suffer, and the evil prospered. But it was urged that the good fortune of the wicked was not enduring, and that the dark days of the righteous would have a happy ending.

But as time went on the fortunes of unhappy Israel did not mend, and those who laid oppressive burdens on them continued to wax rich and grow strong. The situation was explained by a further prolongation of the time of trial, and relief was promised by offering compensation that is adequate to make good any pain. Eternity becomes available for man, and with this conception it becomes possible to fulfill the prophecy, "She shall receive of Jahveh's hand double for all her woe."[1] In the endless life of the future Lazarus can be sufficiently comforted to make up for his misery on earth, and Dives can suffer enough to make the purple and fine linen appear the worthless rags they were.

In the apocryphal and apocalyptic literature of the Jews there are numerous passages which show the resort to this comforting doctrine. And this literature springs chiefly from the centuries shortly before the Christian era, when the conditions of life were at their worst, and the recourse to the old

[1] Isa. 40:2.

explanation of evil would not serve the needs of the times.

The book of Enoch, which may suitably have our first consideration, is composed of several different parts, shows several different hands, and the parts come from varying ages; but it all belongs approximately to the last two centuries before Christ; it all is an embodiment of Jewish teaching and it expresses a singular unity of sentiment so far as our subject is concerned.

Enoch is enabled to travel freely through the universe, and on one of his journeys he is brought to the underworld.[1] He is informed that in this place "the spirits of the souls of the dead assemble," and "wait till their appointed period," "till the day of their judgment." This underworld has separate parts: for the patriarch sees four hollow places, three of which are deep and dark, and one is bright and cheerful and has a fountain of water in its midst. Raphael, who serves as guide, explains the divisions; for Sheol is no longer conceived as a single place, and the fate of the dead is no longer regarded as the same for all classes. In the first place, the section wherein is the bright spring of water is reserved exclusively for the souls of the righteous. In Sheol the sheep are separated from the goats. The sinners are divided from the godly, and are themselves put into three classes, and they occupy the remaining three sections. In one of these divisions are found sinners upon whom judg-

[1] Chap. XXII.

ment was not executed in their lifetime, and pending a future day of judgment, they are even now suffering great pain, and enduring the scourgings and torments of the accursed.

The second of these three divisions occupied by the wicked is peculiar. It is set apart for those who were slain in the days of sinners, and who are now making their suit, and making disclosures of the manner of their destruction. It is perhaps intended as an illustration of this class that the case of Abel is cited. Enoch hears one spirit making suit to heaven, and learns from his angel guide that it is the voice of Abel making suit against Cain his murderer, and he will continue his plea until the seed of the latter is annihilated from among the race of men.

The remaining division is assigned to those who were godless and companions of the lawless in the world. Nevertheless they evidently were not of the worst type, for their spirits are not to be punished in the day of judgment, though they were never to be raised from that place, and would forever be companions of sinners. The lot they had elected in the world would determine their fate in eternity.

In the Sheol of Enoch's vision, the departed are not dead. The soul separated from the body retains the full qualities of life. The righteous are all of one class, and so all have the same fate; they are quite separated from the evil-doers and are assigned to a section in the best part of the un-

derworld. As they occupy but one of the four divisions, it may be meant for us to infer that their number is comparatively small. The wicked on the other hand are not all condemned in one class, and do not all have the same fate. There is no difference in the character of their abode, for they all dwell in the cheerless deep and dark caverns. But their fortunes are vastly different. One class has the privilege of eternally lifting their voices to heaven so as to make sure that justice will be done to those at whose hands they suffered. Another class lives in a neutral state, without punishment, but without hope. A third class are suffering torments even pending the day of final judgment. We note an important distinction in that this third class is made up of those who did not experience their just meed of punishment in the world above. The inference is that those who like Lazarus did suffer in the world will find respite and comfort in Sheol.

In one of the Parables,[1] a later portion of the book, there is a poem dealing with the resurrection and the judgment, of which I quote a part:

> And in those days shall the earth also give back
> that which has been entrusted to it,
> And Sheol also shall give back that which it has
> received,
> And hell shall give back that which it owes.
> For in those days the Elect One shall arise,
> And he shall choose the righteous and holy from
> among them ;

[1] Chap. LI.

For the day has drawn nigh that they shall be saved.
And the earth shall rejoice,
And the righteous shall dwell upon it,
And the elect shall walk thereon.[1]

From this description it appears that there will be a general resurrection from the earth and Sheol and hell, apparently three designations for the one abode of the dead. God's Elect One is the supreme judge, and he will separate the sheep from the goats. We are not told what will be the fate of the wicked; but the righteous shall return to the surface of the earth and take up their abode upon it again, a fate always assumed to be preeminently desirable. Man esteems this earth good enough as an abode. All he desires is permanence. It was sufficient that the brother of Mary and Martha be restored to the life he had laid down.

Another of the Parables[2] develops more adequately the good fortune of the righteous:

Blessed are ye, ye righteous and elect,
For glorious shall be your lot.
And the righteous shall be in the light of the sun,
And the elect in the light of eternal life:
The days of their life shall be unending,
And the days of the holy without number.
And they shall seek the light and find righteousness with the Lord of spirits:

[1] I have used Charles' translation throughout.
[2] Chap. LVIII.

There shall be peace to the righteous in the name of the Eternal Lord.
And there shall be a light that never endeth,
And to a limit of days they shall not come,
For the darkness shall first have been destroyed,
And the light established before the Lord of spirits,
And the light of uprightness established forever before the Lord of spirits.

There are two significant notes in this picture. Great emphasis is laid upon the endlessness of the happy life of the blessed; and then the righteous dwell always in the light, for darkness, often regarded in itself an evil, is eliminated from the earth forever.

The doom of sinners is conceived as final. When the woes of Sheol overtake them a loud wail of penitence will be uttered, but it will be in vain even though the cries come from kings and other exalted persons. They will see that they have trusted in wealth and power, and that such things avail nothing when they are delivered over to the angels of punishment.[1]

There is a distinct gloating over the terrible fate of the wicked,[2] natural perhaps on the part of those who have suffered at their hands. Take this example, and we notice its rather gory character:

And in those days in one place the fathers together with their sons shall be smitten.
And brothers one with another shall fall in death,

[1] Chap. LXIII. [2] Cf. Prov. 11 : 10.

Till the streams flow with their blood.
For a man shall not withhold his hand from slaying his sons and his son's sons.
And the sinner shall not withhold his hand from his honoured brother:
From dawn till sunset they shall slay one another,
And the horse shall walk up to the breast in the blood of sinners,
And the chariot shall be submerged to its height.[1]

The righteous may have to wait long for justification and reward. In one place we find the suggestive line, "And though the righteous sleep a long sleep, they have naught to fear,"[2] presenting a conception with which we are very familiar in Christian teaching, that there is an indefinite period of unconsciousness between death and the day of judgment. The righteous often reach the end of their lives, and still there is no amelioration of their distress. In view of the bright hope for the future, there will be abundant compensation:

Fear ye not, ye souls of the righteous,
And be hopeful ye that have died in righteousness.
And grieve not if your soul into Sheol has descended in grief.
And that in your life your body fared not according to your goodness.[3]

The sinners still in the world manifest glee over the seemingly untimely and unrequited end of their godly neighbours:

[1] Chap. C. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Chap. CII.

As we die, so die the righteous.
And what benefit do they reap for their deeds?
Behold, even as we, so do they die in grief and darkness,
And what have they more than we?[1]

But the righteous will have their turn and one of their consolations in the future world will be the spectacle of the vengeance upon the wicked: what they have longed for in vain on earth, they will yet see in death; and so they are exhorted to patience thus:

Wait for the day of judgment of sinners,
And for the day of cursing and chastisement.[2]

But it is pointed out that there is something better awaiting them than vengeance upon the wicked; for they will enjoy an exalted estate:

All goodness and joy and glory are prepared for them,
And written down for the spirits of those who have died in righteousness.
And that manifold good shall be given to you in recompense for your labours,
And that your lot is abundantly beyond the lot of the living.
And the spirits of you who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice,
And their spirits shall not perish, nor their memorial from before the face of the Great One
Unto all the generations of the world.[3]

[1] Chap. CII. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Chap. CIII.

In this passage we note the frequent attempt to depict the future life in such glowing colours that it will offer compensation for the ills experienced in the world. But the writer had not a great imagination, and so to make sure of his point he states prosaically that heaven is better than the earth, that the immortal state of the saints is superior to that of any most favoured condition in this world. We need not blame him, for it is hard for many to believe now that heaven is better than the earth.

In the whole collection of the Enoch literature it is noteworthy that a great deal more is said about the future dire straits of the wicked than of the blessed fate of the righteous. The peace of the latter is never forgotten, but it is mentioned only here and there; while the authors never weary of painting in lurid colours the torments which await the ungodly. In this, however, those writers are but true to human nature. The psalmist whom I have already quoted at length[1] did not come near to losing his faith because he saw that the righteous often suffered, but because he saw that the wicked were generally prosperous, a condition not lightly to be accepted.

The apocryphal book known as II Esdras in our Bibles, or IV Esdras in the Latin, is according to the best authorities a product of the latter part of the first Christian century. But it is as thoroughly Jewish as any of the pre-Christian productions, and it contains much material bearing upon the subject

[1] Ps. 73.

of the future life. Therefore a statement of its contributions will be in order.

In the first place there is a clear account of a resurrection. The Prophet sees a great multitude upon Mount Sion, with crowns on their heads and palms in their hands, praising the Lord with songs. They are the ones who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, for they have confessed the name of God.[1] For these we read, "paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, plenteousness is made ready, a city is builded, rest is allowed, and goodness is perfected. . . . Weakness is done away, and death is hidden; hell and corruption are fled into forgetfulness; sorrows are past away, and in the end is showed the treasure of immortality."[2]

The fate of the other class is made equally plain: "As many as in their life have received benefits, and yet have not known me; and as many as have scorned my law, while they had yet liberty, and, when as yet place of repentance was open to them, understood not, but despised me; the same must know me after death by torment."[3] "Thirst and pain which are prepared shall receive them."[4] As in Enoch there is no possibility of bettering one's condition by repentance after death. As long as this life endures it is possible to turn to God and be saved; but once the portals of Sheol are entered, no tears will avail, bitter regrets will be useless; there is no discharge from their prison,

[1] 2:42-48. [2] 8:52 ff. [3] 9:10-12. [4] 8:59.

and no one can cross the great gulf to put a drop of water on the burning tongues of the damned.

There is a passage in Judith which shows clearly that in the underworld the physical body survives and is the seat of the endless pain of the lost. There is a *resurrectio carnis.*

> Woe to the nations which rise up against my race :
> The Lord Almighty will take vengeance of them in the day of judgment,
> To put fire and worms in their flesh,
> And they shall weep and feel their pain forever.[1]

The victims are accounted sinners because they have lifted up their hands against Israel. The attempt to harass and destroy God's elect people is deemed sufficient offense to warrant eternal punishment. And physical pain is its essential feature.

I have reserved to the last a consideration of the book which invites us to the richest field for the study of the Hebrew thought on immortality, the so-called Wisdom of Solomon. In spite of the fact that this treatise was polemical in its aim, it is a beautiful and inspiring poem. It comes probably from a period some fifty years before the advent of our Lord, and was written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew, who strove to correct some pernicious ideas which he found to be widely prevalent in the large colony of his fellows in Egypt.

In our Bible there are two writings, one in the

[1] Judith 16, 17.

canonical list and the other in the apocryphal collection, Koheleth and the Son of Sirach, which set forth the line of teaching which became the foundation of the great and at times influential school known as the Sadducees. Both writings disclose editing by later hands to blunt the edge of what we may call their Sadducean doctrine. Some really inspired poet and God-fearing Israelite saw that this mild revision had not counteracted the unwholesome effect of these popular books and he composes his own work to offset some of their doctrine. The teaching of Koheleth, at least in some of its features, was especially offensive, and resulted naturally in the slackening of Jewish religious practice.

The author of the Wisdom of Solomon shows that there were especially two conditions which constrained him to take up his pen. One was the still too prevalent acceptance of Koheleth's contention that man was mortal. In a fine passage our poet sets forth this to him skeptical view:

> For they said among themselves, reasoning not aright;
> Short and sorrowful is our life;
> And there is no healing when a man cometh to his end,
> And none was ever known that returned from Hades,
> Because by mere chance were we born,
> And hereafter we shall be as though we had never been:
> Because the breath in our nostrils is smoke,

And reason is a spark in the beating of our
hearts,
Which being extinguished, the body shall be
turned into ashes,
And the spirit shall be dispersed as thin air.[1]

The other condition which the author faces is a wide-spread persecution of the righteous by the wicked. Many attempts have been made to fix this persecution historically. It is perhaps impossible to reach definite results in that respect; at all events scholars have not attained agreement. It is clear that in the author's time, whenever it was, those who were lax in religious practice, and taught men so, would not brook the to them insolent zeal of the rigid Pharisaic conformity to the law which was practised by a faithful few. The author describes the tyrants' program and the motives which actuated them:

Let us oppress the righteous poor.
Let us not spare the widow,
Nor reverence the gray hairs of the old man full
of years.
But let our strength be to us a law of righteousness,
For weakness is condemned as unprofitable.
But let us lie in wait for the righteous, for he is
useless to us,
And is opposed to our doings,
And upbraideth us for sins against the law,
And denounceth to us sins against our discipline.
For he professeth to have knowledge of God,

[1] 2:1–3.

And calleth himself the servant of the Lord.
He became to us a rebuke to our machinations;
He is grievous to us even to look upon,
Because his life is unlike other men's,
And his ways are peculiar.
Let us see if his words be true.
Yea, and make trial of what will happen at his going forth.
For if the righteous man be God's son, he will uphold him,
And deliver him out of the hand of them that rise up against him.
With insult and torture let us test him,
That we may learn his gentleness,
And prove his patience under wrong.
Let us condemn him to a shameful death,
So shall there be made examination of him from his words.[1]

These stinging phrases bring to our minds other taunts hurled at another innocent sufferer who was hounded to his death by the wicked: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross."[2] And they place beyond doubt what was one of the problems which confronted the author of this book. Those who disregarded God and His law plundered, oppressed and slew those who piously followed their religious principles, and no angel of Jahveh stayed their evil hands. The godly died a cruel death, while the wicked lived and waxed fat on their spoil.

[1] 2:10–20. In part I have used Goodrick's translation.
[2] Matt. 27:40.

Justice would be meted out to both parties in the next world. First, there is much said about the final fate of the wicked. Sometimes the author resorts to the old view that the wicked would be cut off in an hour when they did not look for it.[1] In another place stress is laid upon tortures they will be called upon to endure.[2] But the most characteristic idea is that the wicked will look upon those whom they persecuted and oppressed, will become sensible of their own fatal mistakes, and realize the transitoriness and worthlessness of the wealth and power for which they had sold their souls.[3]

And what of their victims? What is the fate of those who paid the price of their faithfulness with their blood? The full answer is found in two brief but splendid messages:

> But the righteous live forever,
> And with the Lord is their reward,
> And the care for them with the Most High.
> Therefore shall they receive the crown of royal dignity,
> And the beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord:
> For with his right hand he shall cover them,
> And with his arm shall he shield them.[4]

And in a still more exalted strain:

> But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
> And no torment shall ever touch them.

[1] 4:3 ff. [2] 16:15 ff. [3] 5:2-13. [4] 5:15 f.

**In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to die,**
**And their departure was regarded as evil,**
**And their going from us as destruction.**
**But they are in peace.**
**For though in the view of men they were punished,**
**Their hope is filled with immortality;**
**For God made trial of them,**
**And found them worthy of himself.**[1]

We note an idea found already in the Satan stories of the book of Job. God did bring the suffering upon the saints, but He brought it not to see them suffer, nor to break them down; but He brought it to show that they would stand the test as gold; so that in the end He could give them their eternal reward.

At this point our investigation ends, for the last contribution of Hebrew thought has been presented. I think it true to say that human wisdom has gone no further. In the teaching of our Lord we can get no further. In the pages of a purely secular philosophy we can rarely get so far.[2]

We have reviewed the Hebrew treatment of the great problem of good and evil, and have noted

[1] 3:1–5.

[2] I may quote a very recent authority: "The Western mind is much more disposed—if we must have a theodicy—to the view that suffering here is purificatory—a preparation for a better and higher existence hereafter. The scientific and positive temper repels both suggestions [Hindoo occultism and that just quoted] —accepts the facts of life and believes that the moral problem lies outside the range of the human faculties" (Professor James A. Lindsay, M. D., *Nineteenth Century and After*, October, 1917).

contributions covering a thousand years. We must use our material discriminatingly, and doing so have reached some eternally valid results.

First of all the Bible is right in that we can never explain either good or evil apart from God. Otherwise we reach inevitably a dualism that is intolerable. In some Christian thinking this dualism creeps in, for there are in effect two gods, one bringing good and the other evil. We must hold as fundamental in our creed and in our thinking the absolute oneness of God. And that one God created the whole world, that which seems to us good and that which seems to us bad. Paley saw that an intelligent man must have made the marvellous watch, and we must see that an equally intelligent man, and it may be an equally moral man, must have made the deadly bomb.

If God were transcendent only, creating every object and regulating every force by fiat, it is hard to see why He made anything like pain or disease or death. But if God is immanent also, Himself painfully working upward in the world, then perhaps it may be possible to get a glimmer of light even though it is through a glass darkly. In this world we can hardly hope for a clearer vision. The Hebrews thought that God could slay the enemies of Israel by sending an angel by night with a flaming sword. We find that our foes can only be conquered by hard blows and the utmost sacrifice. We bleed because Servia blocked the communication of the Teuton towards the coveted

East. Israel bled because Judah was on the road to Egypt. But God created both the Assyrians and the Hebrews, the Central Powers and the Allies combined against them. We must hold to the hard facts, even though we may never hope fully to explain the mystery of their relations.

It is inevitable that there shall be great suffering in this world. There will always be men born blind, and the towers of Siloam will fall and kill. Our Lord offered no explanation, but He insisted upon the facts: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Death is sure to come to all, and it begins with pain to the one that is taken and ends with unutterable woe to those left behind. And the suffering comes with equal chance to the sinner and to the saint. Moreover pain attacks the righteous with its fangs undrawn. There is no devotion and there is no virtue that will inoculate any man and render him immune from woe. It is a part of the divine processes of life, and must be met when it comes. From the growing pains of childhood we do not fully recover.

It follows that pain is not necessarily a punishment sent of God to chastise the sinner. It is indeed a great evil, and so hardship and pain are not to be artificially created. It is an evil that God is working in all ages to overcome; "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents [that he was born blind], but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."[1] The blindness had nothing to

[1] John 9:3.

do with sin, but it offered occasion for a manifestation of the mercy of God. One of our Lord's essential offices was to heal the sick, for God is at enmity with disease, as with every other form of evil. Any man is doing God's work who gives his life to the relief of suffering.

The conditions of life have been greatly improved. Man has learned to conquer blasting and mildew, irrigation overcomes the peril of drought, artificial light enables us to prolong the days, fire and ice enable us to live in any climate hot or cold, sanitation has banished many dreadful diseases, and anæsthetics have abolished much human agony. Moreover, the scientific age is only at the dawn. It is difficult to conceive what a safe and painless habitation this earth may yet become. And all this good that has been done and that yet will be done is working out the blessed will of God.

And yet no science and no philanthropy will be able to relieve human life of all of its concomitant ills; a painless life on earth is an idle dream, and so man can never be completely satisfied with what this earth affords. A physical body and a mortal life can never guarantee complete exemption from pain, and can never meet the universal and deep yearning of the human soul. And yet we need not despair, or denounce the world as evil, or God as unkind.

In the faith that our Lord has gone to prepare a place for us, that in His Father's house are many mansions, that the wreck of the body does not in-

volve the wreck of the soul, that the soul is alive forever and will dwell eternally with God, all human aspirations are met, and adequate compensation for every evil is offered. And that faith is not a reckless conjecture, nor a counsel of despair to men dying a hopeless death, but it is the conviction of many of God's choicest spirits, and it is the deliberate and oft repeated teaching of our blessed Lord.

I do not like to think that God sends the pain for disciplinary purposes. I do not like to think He expressly sends it at all. And yet it is certain that pain may be man's great opportunity. Hard work makes the body strong, and hard discipline may develop the soul. The only ground for Lazarus' repose in Abraham's bosom was the rough time he had in the world. To be lifted up on the cross is never pleasant, but if it comes, it may prove a way to meet the conditions of entrance into the eternal kingdom. In some stage of life here or hereafter we shall all be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

But what of Dives writhing in torments? Could Lazarus be satisfied with the peaceful rest of heaven, while he beholds one who was but lately his brother burning in the flames? There is no doubt what the Hebrews thought, and there is no doubt what Christians have thought. And the Hebrews had the better case. For they lived before Christ, and those over whose everlasting torments they exulted were they at whose hands they had cruelly suffered.

To-day, however, it is not easy to be complacent with the conception of eternal pain. It raises serious disquieting thoughts. We feel the difficulty deeply. How shall we endure paradise if we must hear in vain the cry for a drop of water to cool our brother's parched tongue? Why, many of us fret to-day because we are constrained to live in ease and comfort, and cannot share the stress and danger of those at the front. God is certainly striving to overcome pain. Shall His work so completely fail that countless souls must suffer torment forever? I feel the burden of this problem, and yet I have no easy and certain solution to offer. But I do rejoice that we are not asked, still less compelled to believe in hopeless and eternal woe; for in the Catholic creeds, which embody the vital points in the Christian teaching, we have the privilege of expressing our faith in the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting life, and in the communion of saints; but there is not a single word about the eternal condemnation of the wicked. I find contentment in the positive affirmation of the creeds, and I have at least a halting faith that God will not ultimately fail in the eternal mission to save the world. Lazarus indeed had a poor opportunity in this world, but many a Dives is equally unfortunate. They live the lives they know; they are the product of their unhappy environment. We may at least hold the hope that another chance will be given, that they may yet learn by severe discipline and heroic sacrifice some of the lessons

which they failed to get while living in the world. The Saviour of men may not preach in vain to all the spirits bound in their prison.

We are living to-day in the midst of the greatest calamity that ever befell this world. The times are out of joint. The darkest age in the whole history of Israel's woes offers no comparison. If we try to assess the material damage, we are baffled. If we assay to make an inventory of the spiritual injury, the task is beyond our power. We have become so fed up with horrors that our senses are deadened, and consequently it is impossible for any one to make an adequate impression upon our minds of the pain of the world to-day. Moreover, so far as human foresight goes, America has hardly yet begun to feel the anguish that must yet come. We can hardly suffer as Belgium and Serbia and France and England, allies by whose side we have tardily taken our place. God be praised that we have taken it at last. But even though we have entered the field at the eleventh hour, when the heat and burden of the day are diminished, we shall hardly hope to see the sun set until from our side too has flowed a stream of sweat and blood.

The responsibility for this unutterable woe rests upon a single man. No matter how urgent may have been the advocacy of the Crown Prince, or the military staff, or the Chancellor, the final source of authority in the German Empire is the Kaiser. He hurled his challenge to the civilized world, and the world was compelled to take it up or be craven

cowards and abject slaves, fit subjects for a bondage worse than the Egyptian and the Babylonian combined. For three and a half years an ever increasing part of the world has been fighting and dying to save human freedom. The vast forces struggling to preserve liberty have fought bravely and self-sacrificingly, and have achieved some splendid victories. We have never lost faith in their ultimate triumph. Nevertheless it is unhappily clear that even after these weary years of travail, our enemies still have an enormous advantage so far as the military situation is concerned. (June, 1918.)

We would hardly dare to affirm that the Allies are all guiltless and our enemies wholly bad. Still, ambition for power is the match that kindled the conflagration that is burning up the treasures of the world, and up to the present wickedness is triumphant. The old Hebrew theology would prove utterly helpless to account for the catastrophe or to comfort those who mourn. It is impossible to believe that God's wrath has broken out against the sons of men as it did in the days of Noah. God's anger may indeed be aroused, but if that be the case, so far as we can see it is indiscriminatingly destroying the bad and the good. The shell from a cannon is deadly though the lanyard be pulled by a base hand, and the high explosive falls in a group of the choicest spirits among the sons of men.

But we will never lose our faith in God. We shall hold our faith in Him because we believe that He bids us fight on till victory is won, and liberty

is so firmly reëstablished in the world that no despot will ever dare lift his unholy hand against it again. Meanwhile, buildings of sublime beauty are destroyed. Never mind, if only ugly barracks can be built in their stead. Immense sums of money are being destroyed as completely as if gold were dropped in the bottom of the sea. Never mind, it is but trash. Millions of hearts are bearing the pain of bereavement. Never mind, God will wipe the tears from their eyes, and a childless mother will learn—if need be, she must learn—to say with pride, I have borne a soldier.

Never mind what we suffer. There are certain things that God wants in this world, and wants us to want them, and they are worth whatever it may cost. If we act as well as pray "thy will be done on earth," we will get them, but we may have to pay what is to us a staggering price, because the price may be set by one who is unscrupulous. The Kaiser has made the price of freedom high just now, but thank God, the liberty-loving people have elected to pay, even to the last penny and the last drop of blood. We may lose the whole world, but we shall save our souls.

So it is not all loss. Two considerations help us to bear this heavy cross. One I indicate by borrowing from a great and popular book, "A Student in Arms." In the chapter on "A Sense of the Dramatic," Hankey speaks of the fighting soldier. "Every detail of his life is sordid and uncomfortable. His feet are always damp and cold. He is

plastered with mud from head to foot. His clothes cling to him like a wet blanket. He is filthy and cannot get clean. His food is beastly. He has no prospect of anything that a civilian would call decent comfort unless he gets ill or wounded. There is no one to sympathize with his plight or call him a hero. If he has any sense of the dramatic, he will feel that he is doing his bit for the regeneration of the world, that history will speak of him as a hero, and, like Mark Tapley, he will see in his hardships and discomforts a splendid chance of being cheerful with credit. He will know that God has given him a man's part to play, and he will determine to play it as a man should. There are many men of this kidney in the army of the trenches, and they are the very salt of the earth. They have been salted with fire. They are the living proof that pain and suffering are something more than sheer cruelty—rather the conditions which turn human animals into men, and men into saints and heroes fit for the Kingdom of God."[1]

The author of that splendid book was killed on the battle-field. Earthly life can discipline him no further, and it does not need to. But there are many others who have come to the same end, without having achieved the same results of spiritual discipline. They had to meet a physical and mental test before they were taken into the army, but the less said about the moral and religious state the better.

[1] PP. 174 ff. (First Series).

In their death we have lost our sons and our brothers. Has God lost them? Or have they lost God? If so, our travail is vain. Could we who survive take the great gift if our brothers were lost everlastingly in putting it into our hands? We had better be beaten slaves forever than accept liberty at a cost like that. Blood and treasure the world may pay, but it does not have to throw in souls to make up the account. The Christian world always looked upon our Lord's death as His greatest achievement. It was indeed the crowning act of sacrifice, perhaps the surest sign of the eternal Sonship. God has achieved an eternal victory, and evil is vanquished through pain. And what of Christ's brothers? They are singularly like Him, if we measure them by His own standard, for He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."[1] Those soldiers are our friends, and they laid down their lives for us. We shall be saved, and it cannot be that they will be lost. Freedom will be regained for the world, and those who save liberty for us at the cost of the highest gift they could offer can hardly suffer forever in Hell. In Abraham's bosom rather they shall find the peace denied them in the world. May we so bear our little part of the burden that we shall be accounted worthy to join them there.

[1] John 15:13.

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